

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

OCTOBER 1890.

EIGHT DAYS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE TOUCHSTONE OF PERIL.'

I will a round unvarnished tale deliver.—*Othello.*

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE MALL.

At last! The tyranny is overpast! The fierce turmoil of the sunshine is over. The grievous day is done. The joyful hours of darkness are at hand. The evening time is short, but it is cool and pleasant. People rush out to enjoy it.

Every English person in Khizrabad is now preparing to come forth from the dank confinement of the darkened bungalows. Before each bungalow stands a vehicle of some kind, or a horse.

Philip Lennox is standing in the pretty porch of Mr. Wynn's house by the side of his splendid coal-black charger and of May Wynn's pony. He is patting that honest but ugly beast—he is a hill pony, and therefore not handsome—affectionately. Does he not carry his lady-love, the sweetest lady upon the earth? And now May Wynn herself comes forth, bright and fair as the dawn. And now Lennox is helping her to mount. What a thrill passes through his frame as he feels the touch of her little foot on his hand. And May Wynn, too, thinks that she has never been helped to mount so delightfully before: so gently and yet so firmly, so exactly well. The strong men shoot you up too fast, and the weak men lug you up too slowly; but here was an exact adjustment of strength. That was a hand to be trusted to. They have ridden through the English quarter. They have passed

out at the Jumoo Gate. The portion of the fine road leading out of that gateway which lies between it and the cantonment forms the Khizrabad Mall. The wide width of the metalled centre which forms the carriage-drive, the earthen tracks between the beautiful avenues of trees on either side, one of which is used as a walk and the other as a ride, are all three carefully watered, and hence the natives call the Mall the *Thundee Suruk* (the 'cool road'). How delightfully cool and fresh it is! How sweet the smell of the freshly-sprinkled earth!

May Wynn has on a linen riding-habit, and her pony has a big barrel and short legs and a very shaggy mane, and so the comparison that has often suggested itself to Lennox before occurs to him again.

'I am riding by the side of Una on her lion,' says he, gazing tenderly into her eyes.

'And I am riding by the side of Sir Launcelot,' she says, gazing softly into his.

Ah, those first dear looks of love, into which the veiled future throws its deep and tender spirit.

They see young Walton and young Hill coming quietly down the ride in the distance, and then they see them suddenly put their ponies in motion and come rushing towards them at racing speed.

'I have won it!' cries the pretty, girl-faced Louisa Hill, as he pulls up a little in front of them. 'I have won it! I am to be the first to congratulate you, Miss Wynn!'

'Oh, thank you,' cries May, in her soft, sweet, tender voice. Her cheeks were always pale, and have become the paler by reason of even these few months in India; but now there is on them a tender rosy tint like the earliest blush of dawn—bright presage, friendly hearts would have said, of a coming glorious day.

'But is it so indeed?' cries the Babe, as he too has come up, and pulled up, and lifted his hat, and given 'Good evening!'

'Are you indeed engaged, Miss Wynn?'

'Yes,' says May, softly, the sweet blush deepening on her cheek.

'Ah!' cries the Babe, in a tone of anguish, and he turns up his eyes, and smites his bosom. 'Ah, procrastination! procrastination! Oh, the evils of delay! Delays are dangerous! I wrote it in my copy-book—very often.'

'What is the matter, you silly boy?' says May Wynn.

'Do you not know it? Have you not seen it? He never told his love, but let concealment like a worm in the bud prey upon his damaged physiog——. I had proposed to myself to propose to you—this very day.'

'Oh, had you?' says May, laughing.

'Then everything would have been changed. You would have accepted me?'

'Of course,' says May, smiling.

'And I should have been the happiest of men!'

'Say *boys*,' interpolates May, quietly.

'But "they have given thee to another,"' cries the Babe, quoting the words of a then popular song. 'And I am broken-hearted,' and he puts his hand before his eyes.

'Cheer up, my hearty!' cries Loo Hill, entering into the fun, such as it is, of the scene.

'But perhaps it is not too late even now,' says the Babe, speaking very rapidly; he has a great flow of language at his command when he chooses. 'Captain Lennox, having now become acquainted with the state of my feelings, will have no hesitation, I am sure, in waiving the claim which his prior action has given him.'

'None at all,' says Lennox.

'But what nonsense I am talking. I do congratulate you most heartily, Miss Wynn; everyone will. Come along, Louisa!' And the two silly boys dash off again.

Under the stately portico of the Bank House, a fine two-storied building standing by the side of the public garden, and at the immediate edge of the city proper, stands a handsome carriage with a handsome pair of horses in it. Mr. Hilton occupies the upper story of the house as his private residence. This upper story has given the numerous dances that have taken place here during the past 'cold season' a special advantage: there was a springy boarded floor to dance on. Of course people said that Mrs. Hilton had given so many dances in order to marry her newly-come-out daughters. There is no reason why parents should not try to settle their daughters as well as their sons. That motive influenced her, no doubt. But she gave so many dances for the same reason that leads us to do most things, because she liked it—liked it in every way. She loved the gay bright scene; she was of a gay bright temperament; she liked to see her friends about her; she was very hospitable; she was very

fond of dancing ; she liked the preparing of the supper and the eating of it ; she liked to see people enjoying themselves. Mrs. Hilton knew nothing of metaphysics, nothing of the juggles of thought ; mysticism and materialism were words too long for her ; she had not reflected on the foundation of morals or what gave them their obligatory force. The Church catechism which she had learnt as a child, and the Prayer-book and the Bible, and the unwritten law of what was 'nice,' supplied her with her guiding principles, her rules of conduct. She loved the services of the Church, of the simple kind to which she had been accustomed in her father's church. Daily services and daily celebration would have seemed to her a making common of holy things—too much like Papistry. The morning and evening service on Sundays and an evening service on Wednesday seemed to her sufficient. She received the Communion three or four times in the year, after much solemn and heartfelt preparation. She read her chapter in the Bible and said her prayers morning and evening. If she liked to put on a pretty bonnet when she went to church of a Sunday, and if her quick eyes took note there of the bonnets of everyone else, she also prayed there devoutly and fervently. If she loved merriment she also loved goodness. She was fond of pleasure, but it never came before duty. If, in the words of the old song, she 'loved to see the dolphins play,' she also 'minded the compass and her way.' If she liked every kind of sociability, if she loved every kind of amusement—picnics, by day or by night, on land or on water, dinners, balls—home was really the centre of her deepest thoughts and affections, of her interests and labours. She had proved herself an excellent daughter, wife, and mother. She liked everything that was nice : nice things, nice people, nice principles, nice ways.

Mrs. Hilton is standing on the steps of the verandah. About her is a redundant air of happiness and health. Those were the days in which life was made delightful once a week by the genius of John Leech. Mary Wade had been, and Mary Hilton was now, a living type of those peculiarly English girls and women whom John Leech so loved to draw, and of whom he has left us so many charming representations—on horseback or on the sea-beach, in the garden or in the drawing-room. She had a somewhat full but well-built figure, a round, rather full-cheeked, comely face, a good mouth and chin, nose a little turned up, large grey eyes, a full forehead, pretty auburn hair, as yet untouched with grey. Mr.

Hilton now descends the broad staircase—which is to become so memorable—and joins his wife. Knowing that he is the manager of the Bank, you are somewhat surprised at his distinctly military air and bearing. He had been in the Company's army, but finding the promotion in his regiment very slow he had left it in order to follow mercantile pursuits, for which he had a natural aptitude. And now the two girls are coming down the staircase, and as Mrs. Hilton watches them descending, the sight that gives her so much pleasure sends a sudden shadow across her face. Though she looks so bright and cheerful, she has had a great sorrow hanging round her heart to-day; Agnes had told her what had happened in the public garden that morning. She had of course observed that Captain Lennox had shown a great liking for her eldest daughter, and it had seemed to her that Maud had a great liking for him. How far had that liking gone? If to the extent of love, it would be a terrible thing for Maud; for from what Agnes had said it appeared that there could now be no doubt what Lennox's feelings with regard to May Wynn were. 'He had no eyes for anyone but her; he had no thought for anyone but her; he did not praise Maud for being so brave—how he would have done so a few months ago! he did not seem to care that she might have been bitten by the snake,' Agnes had cried, angrily and indignantly. 'And then he must see Miss Wynn home!'

Mrs. Hilton had not been angry or indignant—Lennox had not carried his attentions so far as to make it dishonourable for him to withdraw; May Wynn had used no unworthy arts to win him—but she had been very sorrowful. Lennox was not the man to win the fancy of every girl; but his very repellant qualities, his hardness and strong self-will, were congenial and attractive to Maud. Of all the women she had known, Maud was the one most suitable to Lennox; of all the men she had seen, Lennox was the one most suitable to Maud. And it was not to be so. It was very sad—very disappointing. They had seemed, in the common saying, made for one another. But what troubled Mrs. Hilton most was the question of the extent to which her daughter's feeling had been affected. Maud was so reserved and self-controlled that even her watchful anxious mother's eye had not been able to determine this. Maud is not one to love lightly or easily, but she will love deeply and long. If she now has cause for grief it will be a deep and bitter grief. The wound will be a cankering one—it will embitter her life; or, if that be too strong a saying—for with

few or none does the deepest wound to the affections, the loss of the most beloved, of father or mother or child, of husband or wife, embitter the whole of life : time cures the deepest—it would certainly cause her a long period of sorrow and suffering. With her the anguish would be more poignant and last longer than with most. And so a cloud, not acknowledged but felt, has hung over the ladies of the house to-day. Now there comes something to brighten them up.

Just as they have all seated themselves in the carriage the postman comes up, and Mr. Hilton asks him eagerly for the letters. Looking at them quickly, he hands them all to a servant—those are bank letters—all but one. This he opens eagerly as the carriage rolls easily along.

‘Hooroosh!’ he cries, with a flourish of the letter. ‘Good news—good news! I have turned up the king. That opium speculation has turned out a hit, Moll. I have made a lakh of rupees.’

‘Hurrah!’ cries Mrs. Hilton. ‘And I hope you will keep it, Tom,’ she adds.

Mr. Hilton was a man of a very sanguine temperament and fond of speculations, which turned out badly as well as well.

‘Yes, I will,’ says Mr. Hilton. ‘It is a nuisance to get five or six per cent. instead of ten or twenty, but I will invest this money safely for you and the children, Moll. I promise you that.’

For the moment Mrs. Hilton has forgotten all about the griefs of the daughter, whose knees her own knees touch. She has many children at home—she is one of those women who like and have large families—many boys to be sent out into the world; and now that her husband has left the service she has no pension for herself and her children to look forward to, as have all of her lady friends here.

To Maud Hilton this great gain seems as nothing compared with her own probable great loss. Life is personal. We are all very near to ourselves. But there is something in it that addresses itself very strongly to one side of her character.

‘I am so glad,’ she says to her father, ‘of your success, not only because it brings you so much money, but because it is success. That is why it must be such a great thing to be a man. They engage in big things. They can project great schemes and have them succeed.’

‘And have them fail.’

‘Of course—but that makes success all the more satisfactory. Men can command armies, rule kingdoms.’

The words bring Mrs. Hilton’s thoughts back to the impending catastrophe. That is a favourite conjunction of words with Captain Lennox. She has often heard him say that a man’s great ambition should be to command an army, to rule a kingdom; it evidently was his own.

‘Well, I do not know that I have ever heard of a woman commanding an army, but there is one woman who governs a kingdom very well.’

Under the portico of the Fanes’ house stands a magnificent Calcutta-made barouche, on the panels of which are emblazoned the Fane coat-of-arms. The portly long-bearded coachman wears in front of his huge turban a silver badge with the Fane crest in the centre; the trimly-clad grooms, who carry handsome whisks, made of the silvery hair from the tail of the yak set in handles of silver, have the same badge in front of their turbans too. The horses are large and splendid and the harness silver-mounted, with the Fane crest on the saddle and blinkers. And outside the portico stands a smart dog-cart, between whose shafts is a very pretty little country-bred mare—great trotters they. And then from the bungalow, all the doors and windows of which are now being thrown wide open, come forth as handsome a couple as you would see anywhere—the beautiful Beatrice Fane and the handsome William Hay. ‘Wha sae fair as Willie O?’ And he helps her into the dog-cart, and they whirl away. To be seated behind a fast-trotting horse with the girl you love by your side is very delightful—and the swift motion through the fast-cooling air raises their already high spirits higher.

And now Mrs. Fane comes out of the house—a stately lady fitted for stately equipages. Pride is obviously the predominant quality in Mrs. Fane’s nature; you see it in the glance of her eye, in the curl of the short upper lip, in the way the high-instepped foot is placed on the ground. Is she not married to the grandson of an earl, to a Fane? Is it not her greatest grief that society in India is composed of middle-class people, and that there precedence goes by official rank and not by birth? Has she not had to go in to dinner behind the wives of collectors, who were the daughters of London tradesmen? One has to come in contact with all sorts of people, and Mrs. Fane is always courteous—‘D——n her condescension!’ some men have been heard to say—

but in her heart of hearts she holds that there are but two classes, the aristocracy and the *canaille*. But if she is very proud, she is also a clever, kind-hearted woman, a woman of culture and breeding. If those whom her pride hurts do not like her, those whom it does not hurt like her very much. And now Major Fane comes forth in immaculate white-duck trousers and a light silk blouse, *bien ganté, bien chaussé*—quite ‘point-devise.’ And now comes forth the ‘flitting fairy’ Lilian, ‘airy fairy’ Lilian, the girl of ‘sweet sixteen,’ in all the bloom of her youth and beauty and innocence. And Mrs. Fane enters the carriage and seats herself in the luxurious silk-lined seat in her usual stately manner; and then Lilian, putting a hand on either side of the opening, lifts herself in, without putting her foot on the step, with a swing: to her mother’s horror. The girl is so full of health and happiness that they lift her off the ground. She is ready to skip for joy. And then Major Fane gets in in his quiet deliberate way. The different modes in which the same quality of pride displays itself in Major Fane and his wife affords a curious subject of study; but this is a simple narrative of events, which will soon press upon us, and we have not space for any elaborate analysis or lengthy setting forth of character.

The stately equipage is soon rolling over the beautifully smooth surface of the Mall; and now there is a constant lifting of the hat, a continual exchange of nods and smiles. The Mall is crowded with vehicles of every kind: barouches and landaus, the newly-introduced Victoria phaeton, palanquin-carriages (*sej gharries*, as the natives call them, *sej* being their corruption of chaise), dog-carts, and the universally used buggy, the possession of which was held needful before a young man could marry. And you observe that the syces or grooms run behind the various vehicles; we once had running footmen in England. And the white-faced children are in their little carriages or on their little ponies, with their dark-faced ayahs and bearers by their sides. On the walk, cool and pleasant though its well-watered surface be, and though there is now no annoyance from the dust upon it, you see but few pedestrians; but the ride on the other side is crowded with equestrians. Among these you may observe our two young friends, Tommy Walton and Loo Hill.

‘Here they come,’ says the latter, glancing over his shoulder towards the advancing carriage of the Fanes.

‘Now, my boy, just you take the old woman’s side. If you

play me the trick you did last evening and take the other, I will punch your head for you when we get home.'

And no sooner has the carriage passed than the young fellows, having made their salutations, set their well-groomed ponies in motion, catch up the carriage, and proceed to ride one on either side of it: Hill, obedient to the behest of his friend, taking the right, that on which Mrs. Fane sits, while Tommy takes the other. The pretty Lilian blushes as she observes the disposition; there is a pretty admixture of amusement and tenderness on her face. And while Hill nobly engages the attention of mother and father, Walton, riding with his hand on the side of the carriage, bends his head and enters into low and eager talk with Lilian. Their eyes meet and make great play. And then she turns hers coyly away, and only treats him to fitful glances. And to watch those sudden coquettish glances, and her pretty little playful, sometimes scornful, smiles, and to observe the deep solemnity, meant for manly gravity, that had settled down on young Walton's face, would have made an old man laugh—or cry. The young fellow has evidently got the love-fever badly. It is said that this disease, like the whooping-cough, is worst when taken in old age: but it can be very violent in youth too, as the lapse of very many years, of many years of official toil, has not yet caused one to forget. Master Tommy is 'head-over-heels'—no, he would have considered the employment of that expression in connection with his case derogatory—madly, passionately, desperately, or, as he would have said himself, most seriously in love. For he means this love to progress to matrimony. The fewness of his years, and the fewness of the rupees that constitute his monthly income, seem to him no bar. He has collected authentic instances of fellows who had married when only ensigns. And did not 'the Funds' make ample provision for one's widow and children?

But this is 'band evening,' and now they have reached the little open plain where the band plays, and on to which the stream of carriages and equestrians is passing, and Master Tommy has to abandon that sweet propinquity, that delightful proximity.

Everybody is at the band. Old Brigadier Moss and Mrs. Moss in their big barouche, and stout old Colonel Barnes, with his jolly-looking mahogany-coloured face, in his easy buggy, and Major Coote in his sporting cart, and Colonel Grey on horseback, and Doctor Campbell, the civil surgeon, and his wife, in their landau, and Mr. Wynn in his little Victoria phaeton. And here comes

Mr. Melvil with his four-in-hand. How beautifully he manages the splendid well-matched team ! He is a splendid whip ; and on the coach-box with him is the pretty little widow, Mrs. Papillon : Mr. Melvil is a bit of a gay Lothario. And here comes the Rajah Gunput Rao in his handsome carriage, with a couple of troopers riding behind him. He is the only native who takes his pleasure on the Mall or at the band in the same way as the English people do. Leaving aside the bandsmen, and the ayahs, and bearers, and grooms, he is the only native here. The natives of the town are passing the evening hours in their own manner elsewhere. The usual routine is in progress here : the horsemen move from carriage to carriage ; people descend from their carriages and walk about, and meet together and talk. Everyone knows everyone else. There is an air of easy, friendly sociability. Of course envy, hatred, and malice are not wanting in this society of Christian people. But the inequalities of rank and fortune, which are such fruitful causes of them in England, do not operate to the same extent here. Here all are members of the same society ; here all are on the same common plane of 'the services.' Here the income of everyone is known to a rupee, his exact social status fixed. They are almost all members of the same English middle-class, which out here, to its huge delight, is elevated into the highest one. They are most of them school or college mates. They have almost all passed through the civil and military colleges of the East India Company, which has given them a common social training, given them a common social starting-point, given them common memories. There is a good deal of relationship among them. They have had the same experiences ; they have all common friendships and acquaintanceships. There is a great community of thoughts and feelings and interests. Their complete separation from the people of the land draws them the more closely together.

And now there is a great commotion, as Lennox and May Wynn come riding up together. The news of their engagement has been noised abroad. Here is confirmation of it. A little crowd has soon gathered round them, congratulating them.

The Hiltons' carriage is drawn up on the opposite side of the stand, so that they have not seen the newly-engaged couple arrive.

'I wonder what the commotion is about ?' says Mrs. Hilton.

'What is the cause of this sudden commotion ?' she asks of Colonel Grey, as that pleasant-looking officer pulls up by the side of their carriage. 'Not an accident, I hope.'

'Oh, no. An occasion for rejoicing, and not for mourning. Your services are likely to be required again,' he says, looking toward the sisters seated together on the back seat.

'Our services?' says Agnes.

'Yes.'

'As how?' asks Agnes.

But Maud knew: her heart had told her.

'As bridesmaids, to be sure.'

'As bridesmaids!'

'Colonel Grey means that Captain Lennox and May Wynn are also engaged to be married,' says Maud, quietly.

Her mother and sister both turn their eyes upon her, though they would they could not. They both marvel at the wonderful self-command that keeps her face so free from emotion, so unperturbed, her voice at its ordinary modulation. And truly this display of self-control was as great as if she had allowed the glowing, quivering end of a red-hot bar of steel to be applied to her flesh without wincing, without moving a muscle or uttering a cry.

'That is it,' says Colonel Grey; 'I suppose you knew it was coming?'

'Yes,' says Maud, quietly.

'They have just ridden up together, and everyone is rushing up to congratulate them. I have just done so,' says Colonel Grey.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE PALACE.

WE have said that no natives of the better class are to be seen on the Mall or at the band; that they are amusing themselves otherwise elsewhere. The chief of these evening amusements at this season of the year is the flying of paper kites—'kite fighting.' The kite-strings are coated over with a smooth paste, into which very fine pounded glass is introduced, and as the kites fly in the air the string of one kite is made to fall across the string of another, and both are then let go, so that the strings run off the big wooden reels on which they are kept wound, just as a fishing line runs off its reel when the fish is darting away, until one string or the other gets cut, and the kite belonging to it floats away. The

contest is watched by eager crowds, not only because of the interest that is aroused by any contest, such as that between the Oxford and Cambridge boat, because of the interest in one or the other of the kite-flyers, as in the Oxford or Cambridge crew, but because the crowd has a direct personal share in the amusement. By the law of the game the 'cut' kite is lost to the owner (that element of loss is essential in every amusement), and becomes the property of anyone who can catch it, and so the crowd enjoys the fun of a race, of a run for a prize. The kites when cut high up float away to long distances; the runners have to exercise their judgment as to where they are likely to fall.

At this season of the year you will of an evening see hundreds of kites, of every shape, and size, and colour, floating over a native town. They are flown from the flat house-tops. The amusement is followed by grown-up men, by men of rank and station. The kite-flyer takes as deep an interest in the shape and size of his kite as our sporting men in the shape of greyhound or horse. There is often great rivalry between the champion kite-flyers of a town.

The bright evening glow rests strongly against the lofty inner or cityward walls of the great palace-fortress, for these face the west. In one of the bastions of the battlement stands a group of people, or rather two groups. This group consists of attendants, one of whom carries a handsome hooqah; another a peacock's tail set in a silver handle; another an earthenware water-bottle, and a cup made of silver beaten very thin, so as not to heat the cooled water when poured into it; another a large palm-leaf fan; while another bears a gilded chair, and another a gilded footstool. The other group consists of the Nuwâb of Khizrabad, the master of this noble palace-fortress, the descendant of a long line of princes, and two of his favourite courtiers. The most plainly dressed man of the three is the Nuwâb. This royal house had once possessed world-famous jewels—and many of them still remained to it; had been preserved from the despoiling hands of the Afghan and the Mahratta, withheld from the pawnbroker and the money-lender: so that the royal person still blazes with gems when the Nuwâb seats himself on the famous 'Peacock Throne,' and holds a durbar, and the representative of the English power comes to pay his respects to him. But the only ornament the Nuwâb wears at this present moment is the simple amulet bound round his left arm, a little above the elbow,

It is only a little green bag of silk, with two silk strings attached to it, and within the bag is only a little square piece of jade. And yet more care has been devoted to the preservation of this heirloom than to the preservation of that other heirloom, the great diamond known as 'the Mound of Light.' For upon the piece of jade are certain cabalistic characters which were engraved upon it by that prince of magicians, King Solomon himself. As long as this mystic gem is in the possession of the royal house of Khizrabad, it is safe from utter destruction; it will remain royal still; however tempest-tossed, the bark cannot be lost.

The Nuwâb wears a plain muslin long coat and a pair of silk pyjamas, so full in the legs as to give him the appearance of having on a petticoat; on his head is a little gold-embroidered muslin skull-cap, and on his feet a pair of green gold-embroidered slippers. He is a stout, middle-sized man, with a broad, good-humoured, foolish-feeble face. The light of a full strong manhood will never again shine in his lack-lustre eyes or illumine his now wan-hued countenance. He has abused and wasted it. He is but a poor phantom man, as he is but a poor phantom king. When the English, superior in their struggles with the Mahrattas, had become masters of Northern India, of this part of the great peninsula, they had thought it better to leave the King of Khizrabad on his throne, and work through his name and ancient authority. They left him all his titles and dignities, and assigned him a princely income. Within the walls of his own castle he still retained the full power of a monarch, the power of life and death; but those powers, being abused, had gradually been taken away. Tired of paying enormous debts, the English rulers had taken the management of the income and the lands from which it was derived into their own hands; and as the magic of the royal name began to fade away with themselves, as the need for its use disappeared, they began to treat it with less respect and reverence. It is difficult to keep up a sham. These things did not trouble the present occupant of the throne. That the representative of one of their most famous lines of princes who, by virtue of his office, was not only their temporal, but their spiritual head, should be a mere mock monarch, a mere puppet king, a prisoner in the hands of the infidel, a pensioner of their bounty, was most galling to his co-religionists. But his palace and his zenana, money enough for his personal wants, the respect and homage of a prince, these were all the Nuwâb himself wanted.

He was very well satisfied to have these secured to him by the English, in whose power he had a very confident trust.

He did not fail to remember, if others did, how greatly his grandfather had suffered when a prisoner in the rough hands of the Mahrattas, how he had been subjected to personal indignity and violence, had been straitened for his daily bread, until the English had delivered him: and how it was solely owing to those English that his royal house had continued to maintain an existence of any kind whatsoever. No, no, he was very well satisfied. A princely income, the pomp and show of royalty, without its cares, the possession of his palace, royal retinues and royal surroundings, these were enough for him. He did not care for power. He did not mind being a monarch only in name, a monarch without a kingdom, without a people. His position had its worries and discomforts; but what had been the position of his immediate predecessors? He shuddered to think of it. There were members of his household who considered the present condition of things most irksome and intolerable—most degrading, most humiliating. That was all very well. But *he* enjoyed the present comfort; *he* would have to run the risks, the terrible risks, that any attempt to alter that condition of things would involve; *he* would have to bear the burden of active royalty.

The Nuwâb is standing at the edge of the bastion, and gazing out intently over the lofty parapet wall. Beneath him lies the great city founded by his ancestors. There are the encircling battlements which gave it and them their power and importance. There is the lofty and massive mosque, with its beautiful, slender, soaring minarets. Behind him are the exquisite public halls and private chambers of the magnificent and once impregnable palace-fortress they had reared for themselves, and in which they had lived so long and with such splendour. There is the majestic gateway, from the top of which floats forth their ensign and his own. And there, right before him, stands forth clear against the evening sky the Flagstaff Tower on the ridge, from which floats forth the English flag, the ensign of 'the Company.' There are the thatched roofs of the cantonment, the encampment of the foreign power that holds him and his kingdom in thrall. Is this strange conjunction raising sad or fierce thoughts in his mind? Not a bit of it. Is he thinking of the change, of the glorious past and the inglorious present? Not in the very least. He is gazing out over the lofty battlement, in order to watch the movements of two kites, with

whose evolutions his mind is entirely occupied. The art of the game lies in making your kite outsoar the other, and then dive down so that your line may run over the other, with the advantage of the descending weight. The Nuwâb Sahib is watching the manœuvring of two very large kites with breathless interest. And now the two strings have crossed, and they are allowed to run off the reels, and the lately taut-held kites now float loosely away. They keep floating away, until from the crowd of men and boys below arises a great shout, the held breath is let loose, and a cry of '*Vo kata*' ('It is cut'), and one of the kites becomes upright once more, and soars upward in all the triumph of success, while the other goes warping away on its side, in all the abandonment of defeat. It has been cut high up in the air; it seems probable that it will fall within the palace walls. 'It is coming this way! it is coming this way!' cries the Nuwâb, in a tone of great excitement, and he moves to the end of the bastion, and shuffles along the top of the battlement as fast as his enfeebled frame and loose trousers and loose slippers will let him. The trailing string of the derelict kite passes over the battlement, close in front of the Nuwâb. He puts out his hand and seizes it. He hauls the kite down with as great a sense of joy and triumph as ever soldier or sailor felt when he hauled down an enemy's flag. 'I caught it myself! I caught it myself!' he cries, in tones of intense delight and triumph, to the courtiers and attendants who have followed him. They load him with applause, and felicitations and congratulations.

Here were the very dregs of that energy, and activity, and fierce acquisitiveness which had founded this royal house.

But there was one of a much stronger and fiercer character than the Nuwâb in the castle. On the very verge of the eastern battlement that went sheer down to the waters of the Jumna stood one of the most beautiful chambers in the palace. It was octagonal in shape, and three of its sides stand out from the line of buildings of which it forms a part, and round these sides runs a balcony which actually overhangs the giddy height. Those three projecting sides are of pure white marble and profusely adorned with inlaid work, and the balcony without is a most exquisite specimen of that feature of architecture of which we find such noble specimens in the East. It rests on massive sandstone brackets, of noble design and workmanship; its roof is formed of marble slabs, which project a good way beyond the marble

columns on which they rest ; these delicate marble columns, with their handsome bases and capitals, are most beautifully proportioned, and each of their four square sides is also profusely adorned with inlaid work, and the marble slabs which run from column to column and form the parapet are exquisitely pierced, each one of a separate design, each one a work of art. The aerial grace of the apartment befits its aerial situation. The chamber is very lovely within likewise. The floor, the walls, the beautifully curved roof are all of pure white marble. The walls are adorned with fruit, and flowers, and foliage, here showing in their natural hues in inlaid work, there standing out still more beautifully in relief from the pure white surface of the wall. This chamber forms part of the suite of apartments set aside for the use of Fatima Begum, the 'Adornment of the Palace,' the 'Delight of the Universe,' more commonly known as the Sikunder Begum, the youngest and favourite wife of the Nuwâb of Khizrabad. But, with the exception of the bath-chamber, which with its tessellated marble floor, its exquisitely carved marble baths and cisterns, and its honeycomb roof, encrusted with minute mirrors, forms one of the wonders of the palace, this is the only apartment applied to her own personal use. This is the chamber in which she wholly lives. It forms her bedroom, dressing-room, boudoir, dining-room, drawing-room. In the centre of it stands a large square bedstead, over whose web or mattress of broad tape interlaced there is just now flung only a lovely flowered-silk coverlet, but on which lie many silk-covered pillows and cushions. On one side of this stands a massive wooden chest or coffer, and with the exception of a lacquered and gilt chair, and a couple of coarse wicker-work stools, there is no other article of what we call furniture in the room. But a great number of the Begum's personal belongings are bestowed in the niches, with flamboyant tops and artistically carved sides, which adorn the walls of the chamber. In these are placed her little round mirror, and her wooden tooth-comb inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and her box of antimony, and the little leaden pencil with which she applies it to her eyelids ; in these stand her elegantly shaped and beautifully chased long-necked gold scent-bottles. And there in silken covers rest some beautifully written, and beautifully illuminated, and beautifully bound, copies of the works of Jâmi, and Hafiz, and Sheikh Sâdi of Shiraz : for the Begum can read, and the heap of cream-coloured, gold-spangled paper, and the pretty Cashmere-

made sliding pen-and-ink case, lying on the bed, show that she can write likewise.

She is not occupied either in reading or writing just now, however, as she reclines in luxurious ease; she is dallying with the beautifully-chased gold mouthpiece attached to the end of the long velvet-covered tube or 'snake,' which comes up from the tall, handsome hooqah which stands on a piece of stamped velvet placed on the floor by the side of the bed. Her dress consists of a pair of loose silk trousers, a little silk bodice, of which the two projecting conical portions are adorned with gold embroidery, and of a long soft muslin veil or sheet, of a gossamer-like fineness, and of a rare and beautiful brown tint, which flows about her like a mist. Just now it has been allowed to drop down upon her shoulders, leaving her head and neck bare.

She is a very beautiful woman. The outline of her face is a pure oval. The forehead has a fine full outward sweep; the eyes are like those of a gazelle, large, and liquid, and jet-black; the nose a delicate aquiline; along the line of the lips, neither thin nor full, runs the double curve of Cupid's bow, and within them runs a row of very good teeth, though both lips and teeth are at this present moment disfigured, to English eyes, by the red juice of the *pān* she has just been eating. On the bed lies a very pretty little silver casket, with curved pierced top; this is the *pān-dān*, or box in which the *pān* leaves, and the quicklime, and the cut betel-nut, and the cloves that are put into them before they are wrapped up into their usual triangular shape, ready for the mouth, are kept. The small, shapely head is well placed on a slender, swan-like neck. She has a beautiful figure too; as she lies upon the bed the character of her dress permits its whole flowing outline to be seen very clearly. Her hands and her feet, which are of course bare, are wonderfully small and very perfect in shape. The Begum, though a slender, is not a little woman, yet her hands and feet are as small as those of a young English girl; that, however, is a feature in which Eastern women surpass our own. The palms of her hands and the soles of her feet, her finger-nails and her toe-nails are dyed red with henna. This custom has arisen in the East to hide the otherwise too pallid, sometimes ghastly hue which the nails and palms and soles present, to simulate the brighter and more healthy colour of colder climes. As an eastern writer would say, the Begum is 'adorned at every point.' She

has rings on her fingers and rings on her toes; there is a silver band round each big toe; she has a bangle of solid gold round each ankle, as well as round each wrist; she has two sets of earrings in her ears, each being bored in the upper cartilage, as well as the lower lobe. Her nose-ring is not the enormous circlet which looks so preposterous and ugly, but a little gold ornament set coquettishly on one nostril. Round her neck is a handsome ornament, composed of little square gold tablets, studded with gems, and joined together by little short gold chains. Her skin is of a very light olive tint. Her cheeks present that warm and bright, yet soft and downy, look which goes only with such a complexion.

But this woman, so fair without, is most foul within. Mesalina did not surpass her in greed or cruelty. If she resembled the Empress Theodora, as depicted in the pages of Gibbon, closely in face and figure, so did she in dissoluteness, in the prodigality and promiscuousness of her favours. She was cruel, cunning, lascivious, vindictive, avaricious. Though many a year had elapsed since life had ceased to have any mysteries for her, though she had a son who was nearly fourteen years old, the Begum was still a very young woman, still under the age of thirty.

She is not alone in the apartment. Not far from one of the windows opening on to the balcony stands a slave-girl of 'Thirty-eight,' that is to say, of the terrible famine year 1838, in which parents not only, as in her case, sold their infants, but even killed and cooked and ate them. The girl is busy cleaning out a cage, which is placed on a high wooden stand. The gold-wired cage contains a gem-like bird—a rare and beautiful bird of some distant, foreign clime. The slave-girl's eyes look very dull and heavy; then as she looks out of the window there comes into them a sudden, wild look; and then as she looks round the room a sullen one. Of late years slavery has found some eminent advocates in England. But they had no personal knowledge of the matter, or they would have known that it is an accursed thing. The command of the person of one human being by another evokes the brute on the one side, produces the animal on the other. The person of this poor bond-girl had been subjected even in her tender childhood to cruel tortures. Then Chunia puts back her arms, and gives a great yawn—a very wide yawn—a very prolonged yawn—a too prolonged yawn; for she has left the door of the cage open, and the other captive, pining for freedom, having no love for captivity even

within golden bars and with immunity from the trouble of seeking for its food, seeing an opportunity of escape has seized it; the beautiful bird has darted out of the cage, out through the open window near, and is winging its joyous flight across the broad expanse of the Jumna, its bright wings flashing in the evening light. The slave-girl's arms drop down, but her mouth continues open as her eyes follow the rapidly disappearing bird. Then from the open mouth comes forth an inarticulate cry, a curious sort of cry, like that of an animal.

'*Henk!* What is the meaning of this?' says the Begum (the bird-cage is behind her). 'What do you mean by making a noise like that—like a sick cow—and disturbing me?'

'The bird!' gasps the girl.

'What about it?' says the Begum indifferently, not looking round. She is reflecting on matters which engage her attention very deeply just now; she is enjoying her scented tobacco.

'Has flown away!'

'What!' cries the Begum. She has raised herself up, and dropped the beautifully chased gold mouthpiece, and leaped on to the floor in a second, swift and noiseless as a panther.

'Where has it gone to?' asks the Begum, in a loud, harsh voice.

'Across the river,' pants the girl.

'Then it is lost,' says the Begum, in a low, soft voice, which sounds more appallingly in the slave-girl's ear than the former harsh one. The girl has shrunk back against the wall. There is on her face a dull, stupid, bewildered, frightened look.

'You have allowed my bird to escape, my beautiful bird, the like to which there was none other in India. You did it on purpose. I know you did.'

The girl makes no answer. She has her hands up, as if to defend herself against a sudden onslaught. She continues to look at her mistress in a dazed kind of way. The thousands of blows she received on her head from shoes and slippers—those of men as well as women—were enough to make her addle-pated.

With the change of voice has come a change of look on the Begum's face. The flaming look of anger has departed, but in its place has come the look of cruel, quiet, satisfied delight you may see on the face of a cat when she watches the captured mouse make little runs before her. The girl has afforded her just and reasonable cause for punishment.

The inner door of the apartment opens, and some one else

now enters the room. *Who is this? What is this?* You have seen the slave-girl, and you now behold the other as indispensable adjunct of the oriental zenana—the eunuch.

‘What is the matter? What has happened?’ exclaims the new-comer, in his thin, shrill, squeaky voice.

‘She has allowed the bird to fly away. It has flown away over the Jumna. There is no chance whatever of getting it back—none. There might have been had it been morning. But now it is evening; it will soon be night—’

‘What?—the bird! flown away!’ cries the eunuch, in his squeaky voice, looking towards the empty cage. ‘That is a great loss. How did it happen?’

‘She allowed it to escape—on purpose—to hurt my feelings—to anger me,’ says the Begum, looking at the girl. She knew that the girl was about as likely to anger her voluntarily as a rabbit a ferret, a mouse a cat, a kid a panther.

The girl shakes her head.

‘You did! you know you did!’ exclaims the Begum furiously. ‘You witch! You female dog! You daughter of Satan!’

‘Shall I give her the slipper?’ asks the eunuch.

‘The slipper!’ says the Begum—‘the bow-string! I must have her life. She shall be hung. The Nuwâb Sahib shall sign an order to that effect.’

‘He no longer has the power to do so.’

‘Yes, these cursed Feringhees have taken that away from him, as they have taken away everything else. May their faces be blackened! May they burn in hell for ever! But the time is now near at hand when we shall get back that power and every other. But you can strangle her here. As I said before, the bow-string! Go and get one.’

‘But how about the body?’

‘You could throw it down into the river.’

‘It might be found. There would be inquiries. You know that this new Ruzeedunt (Resident), this Milmil (Melvil) Sahib is very troublesome.’

‘I know he is—the pig, the infidel, the son of Satan, the brother of an unchaste sister!’ to which she adds many a filthy epithet, for she has a full command of the foul vocabulary of abuse of her native land, and the mere mention of Mr. Melvil’s name always causes her to draw largely on its copious resources. There had been a deadly feud between the two ever since Mr.

Melvil had entered on his present post two years before. His supervision of the doings in the palace, of its finances, had been very minute and strict. But above and beyond everything else, he had shown no desire to aid her—rather a desire to thwart her—in what had been the great aim and object of her life, the recognition by the British Government of the choice which she had prevailed on the Nuwâb to make of her son as heir to the throne, in place of an elder son by a senior wife.

‘If this floor were not of stone,’ says the Begum, ‘I should have a hole dug in it and bury her alive. I should then put my bedstead over the spot, and they might then search for her if they pleased. But go and get the bath ready. Make it boiling hot.’

‘You must not lose your temper,’ says Jhundoo Khan, the eunuch. He has his feminine name as well—Golab (the Rose). ‘If anything happens to her, if she disappears, there is sure to be a row, an enquiry.’ He seems to be very much afraid of the said enquiries.

‘Of course there would be an enquiry. If we sneeze there is an enquiry. But we should simply say that it was an accident; that she went into the bath of her own accord.’

‘We must be very careful as to what we do at this present time,’ says Golab. ‘We must not draw the attention of the English on ourselves these days.’ This Jhundoo Khan was very ambitious. We know that men of his class have risen to high office in the East—to be at the head of armies, of kings’ households, of the State. He already holds a high place in the Nuwâb’s favour, as is shown by his being placed in charge of the apartments of the Nuwâb’s youngest, most beautiful, and most beloved wife—a trust which he systematically betrays, the Begum having won him over, not only to wink at her amours, but to be an accomplice and agent in them. Should the movement against the English succeed, and Khizrabad become an independent State once more, he looks forward to holding the highest office in it, to being Chief Treasurer, or Prime Minister, or Mayor of the Palace, or Commander-in-Chief of its forces. He is very anxious that there should be no collision between the English authorities and the palace just now.

‘And the Soubahdar Rustum Khân is waiting below. Let me shoe-beat her, and be done with it.’

‘No; I will give her the slipper myself. I will make her head bald for her. You hold her hands.’

The eunuch takes the slave-girl by the hands. She makes no resistance. She is overjoyed to have escaped the boiling water. The Begum comes behind the girl, and plucks the long sheet off her. This leaves the whole of the body above the top of the trowsers bare, with the exception of where the little linen bodice covers and encloses the breasts, and where the strings by which it is tied run across the back. In an earthen pan on the floor are some of the little charcoal balls which are used for lighting hooqahs with. The Begum stoops down and drops the slipper she has taken into her hand silently on the floor, seizes the tongs, and taking up one of the red-hot glowing balls, applies it violently to the girl's bare back. The burnt flesh hisses, and the slave-girl gives a leap and yell. The Begum applies the burning ball again, this time choosing the more tender flank, and with another shriek of agony the girl drops down on the floor.

'Put her out,' says the Begum, and the eunuch drags away the wretched, writhing, shrieking girl, and thrusts her out of the lovely chamber.

'Give me a drink of water, Golab,' says the Begum, 'and then call Rustum Khan.'

CHAPTER XI.

THE BEGUM AND HER LOVER.

WHEN Golab has left the apartment the Begum places herself on the bed in a recumbent attitude. She draws the edge of her sheet—which is quite plain, but of great value from its exquisitely delicate texture: it is a piece of muslin of the kind known as *shub-num* (the 'evening-dew')—over her head, but she does not draw it so far forward as to conceal, but only to shade her face, and then she disposes it carefully about her person.

The Soubahdar Rustum Khan now enters the room. He is differently dressed from what he was in the daytime. He has donned his dandy attire. His linen long-coat is a perfect marvel of the lavatory art, so minutely crimped are the sleeves from shoulder to wrist, so snowy white is it. His trowsers are so tight at the ankle, where there is some more of the minute crimping or pleating, that it seems a marvel how he got them over his not very small feet. These are of course bare; he has left his shoes at the door of the chamber. His loosely-tied turban hangs

down very much over one ear: it has been wound round a highly-embroidered muslin skull-cap. His large whiskers have been carefully trimmed, his long love-locks well oiled. He looks the ruffling blade, and he enters with the carriage of one. But in his salutation of the Begum there is a respectful deference as well as an easy familiarity. And he takes a quick glance at her face as he seats himself by the side of the bed. What is her mood to-day—that of the Begum or the lover?

Six months ago, when he first came to occupy his present position of paramour, Rustum Khan had not cared very much for the Begum's moods. His connection with her was a mere love affair: it would end when he left with his regiment at the close of the year, sooner if the Begum saw a more likely man. But now his position had come to possess a political aspect. There were signs that there was near at hand—he had joined with those who were striving to bring it about—one of those great political convulsions in which rank and fortune rearrange themselves. He was one of the bold reckless men whom the Company's service did not satisfy. It was all very well when he was rising from grade to grade; exchanging the musket for the sword; increasing his income from fourteen shillings to five pounds a month. But neither rank nor pay will improve any more, and his views have expanded with his rise. What! after so many years of service, after so many arduous campaigns, after so many severe fights, to find himself still in a subordinate position, with nothing to look forward to but his pension. A vacant life lay before him. He was stifled by his own success. And he did not care for the hollow powerless rank, that of native officer, to which he had attained. Others might think it a sufficient reward for their services to have the English officers shake hands with them and offer them a chair. He thought a great deal too much store was laid on those haughtily rendered civilities and condescensions. They were disagreeable to himself. There was too much of patronage and condescension in them. He thought there was a hollowness in them too—a mockery. It had been all very well, he thinks over and over again to himself, while he was raising himself from grade to grade, but there is no further enhancement of rank or pay left for him now. And his views, his opinion of himself and his powers, expand with his rise. What! after all those years of service, after all those arduous campaigns and bloody battle-fields, to find himself, though called a commissioned officer, lower in rank than those two English boys

(Walton and Hill) who had just joined the regiment—beardless youths with maiden swords!

He had nothing more to gain by drawing his sword for the Company. What inducements were held out to him to draw his sword against it? The immediate command of his own regiment. That was a position worth the having. Why, if he held it only for ten months he would make as much money out of it as his present pay would amount to in ten years. Then the Ranee had promised him the supreme command of the Nuwâb's army when there was one again. He knew that he was not likely to hold his position as the Begum's favourite for ever or for long. But when he had come to have close political as well as love relations with the Begum, when he had seen to what the possession of her favour might possibly lead, he had made it his business—under his gay recklessness was a crafty thoughtfulness—to study her character carefully, and he had come to understand that, should he once obtain that promised high command, his retaining it would depend entirely on his fitness to hold it; the Begum did not allow her passions to interfere with her interests. But he must take care to retain the Begum's favour until he had obtained it. And he knew that, though the Begum seems as ready to forget her rank in her attachments as was the Empress Catherine of Russia, she is really most jealous of its prerogatives. So he watches her mood and temper. Will she be lover or queen?

The former first, at this moment, he thinks: so he seizes the little pink-nailed pink-palmed hand which is hanging over the side of the couch, and carries it to his mouth.

'Sweeter to the lips than honey!' he exclaims rapturously. And then, gently putting it down again, he fixes his large, black, bold eyes on her face and exclaims, 'And the sight of thy face is as collyrium to the eyes; and the sound of thy voice like music to the ear; and thy person hath a sweet savour to the nose. But ah! the bitter-sweet of love! Ah! the pain, the bliss of loving! The lover has everything to delight him and yet he suffers. His heart burns, his liver freezes. The bulbul flies to the rose, but his breast is pierced with its thorns.

Ah! those sugary lips of thine!
In colour like the pomegranate blossom,
In shape like the bow of Cupid;
Lids of a casket of pearls,
Thy eyes like pools of jet.

'And ah!'—(continuing the perusal of her face with his big bold eyes, the Begum sustaining the scrutiny with a pleased fixed

look)—‘the fortunate mole upon thy cheek!’ And then he quotes from the well-known song of Hafiz, than which none other has ever been so much quoted or sung, and which, like its own opening line, seems ‘ever fresh and ever new’—

‘For her black mole I’d gladly give
Bokhara fair and Samarcand.’

He has a fine strong mellow voice. The fine long flowing line comes out from his mouth with a grand smooth wave-like roll.

All this is very pleasant, but business has to be attended to also. And it is business from which the Begum would not let any amorous talk, fond as she is of it, withdraw her.

The Sikunder Begum had entered the Nuwâb’s zenana, as his third wife, at the age of twelve. The next ten years of her life were passed in fulfilling the early-begun duties of a mother, in acquiring the accomplishments the Nuwâb delighted to have her taught. Then she began to take an interest in things outside her own apartments, in the family affairs; and her clearness of intellect and force of will and her influence over the Nuwâb soon gained her a paramount position in the palace. Then she began to chafe against the English control. As has been said already, though the Nuwâb might sometimes find that control annoying, it was to him really a comfort and a relief; the more he was deprived of his authority (the young Begum’s misuse of it was greatly the cause of its curtailment) and relieved of the management of his own affairs, the more happy he felt; but not so the Begum—to her it was a maddening restraint. The Nuwâb might like a go-cart, but it was no place for her. She preferred a chariot. From the moment she had felt the strength of her pinions, the Begum had longed to spread them, to put them to fullest use; she longed to use beak and claw. It was these English who prevented her, who held the jess. She raged furiously against them. This young woman exhibited in her character that combination of dissoluteness and devoutness which appears so strange and yet has been so common. She was very loose in her morals, atrocious in conduct, and yet she was most religious—a fanatic, a bigot, a zealot. She was a furious Mussulmanee, which is the feminine of Mussulman. She therefore hated the English on good religious grounds. The measure of her wrath had been filled to overflowing by the refusal of the ruling power to recognise the Nuwâb’s choice of her son as the successor to the throne of Khizrabad—still a throne. She had now every reason to hate the accursed, interfering, domineering

foreign race—as a wife ; as a mother ; as a true believer ; in the name of God.

And on Mr. Melvil—as one who had made those restrictions more stringent and severe ; who had cast the weight of his much-trusted opinion against her son's succession ; who was the representative of the tyrants and infidels—her hatred had settled and concentrated itself.

But raging against the English had seemed for many years like raging against the adverse forces of nature—against the malign influences of the air, against storm and tempest, against plague and pestilence. Who could control their coming or going ? Only the hand of Fate. But those who could penetrate into the mysterious workings of Destiny had prophesied that the English power was to last for the space of a hundred years only, and that period was now over ; this year, this present year, was the last of the hundred.

And were there not signs that the hand of Fate had begun to work against the accursed foreigner ? The good or ill, the gain or loss, of nations as of individuals, seems to depend on a combination of circumstances. How suddenly had these appeared against the English ! An overstretched empire ; discontent in the army on which their power depended ; discontent among the people ; discontent among the nobles ; fear and trembling, and the hatred begotten of them, in the hearts of kings and princes ; Hindoos and Mahomedans drawn together by a common fear for their religion and caste ; the animosity of the one aroused by the overthrow of the great Mahomedan kingdom of Oudh, of the other by the overthrow of the great Hindoo principalities of Sattara and Nagpore ; general perplexity and trouble. The Begum had done her best to foment the feeling of discontent, to cause the streams of antagonism to join together and rise in one overwhelming flood. She had thrown herself heart and soul into the great conspiracy, and had brought to bear on it the whole force of her intellect, the full strength of her will. But the power of the English was great. The sword is the weapon of Fate, and they held it. Then came this affair of the greased cartridges. Herein, above all, was shown the adverse working of the dread mysterious power. The English were turning the point of the great weapon they held in their hands against their own breast. The fated, foreboded hour was come. The opportunity was given. It was for their foes to seize it. To fan the rising flame of mutiny, make it general, that

must be their object. Her keen intellect saw it, her bold spirit leaped to do it. Let the whole army rise. Then would planning and plotting be turned into bold action. She longed for that.

'Golab said you had something to communicate,' says the Begum.

'Mehndi Ali Khan was here to-day.'

'Was—and he did not come to see me!'

'He had to hurry on to Abdoolapore. The sentence of the court-martial on the men of the 3rd Cavalry is to be promulgated and carried into effect to-morrow.'

'But he will let me know what it is.'

'At once: by special messenger.'

Rustum Khan then proceeds to communicate to the Begum all that Mehndi Ali had communicated to him.

'He is sure of the regiment at Fatehgarh?'

'Yes.'

'That is important, because of the fort there. We must seize all the great fortresses; we must get possession of all the Government treasuries. We shall then be supplied with a great store of powder and shot and guns and money—the sinews of war. We shall have command of a large army. We shall have the means of paying it, and so securing its fidelity. We shall have all the great strongholds in our hands. The whole country will be ours. It only needs that the whole of the army should be with us. Each single regiment should be carefully attended to. We must win over the soubahdars and the jemadars, the native officers like yourself. The army of the King of Oudh will come together again. The Mahrattas will put their armies in the field once more. The great Sikh army will reassemble. What will the English be able to do against such forces as these? And all these armies must be directed against them; not against one another, as heretofore. We must make one common cause, at all events until the English are got rid of. Let there be bold and sudden action, a simultaneous rising everywhere. This will bewilder and daunt the English, and bring the people on our side. Bold action; but there must also be careful preparation beforehand. *Futteh ba bundobust*' (arrangements ensure victory).

The Begum belonged to the class of bold, strong spirits who are not frightened or overpowered by great enterprises; who look at them with a calm, cool eye as affairs to be accomplished by the proper adjustment of means to ends.

‘And the English must be wholly got rid of. They must be slain everywhere—man, woman, and child. They have asserted dominion in a *dar al hug* (land of the true faith). “And kill them wherever ye find them, and turn them out of that whereof they have dispossessed you.” So it is written in the blessed Koran.’

‘We will do so,’ said Rustum Khan, fondling his big, fat calf; ‘God willing.’

‘He will help. Hath he not said it? Is there not this line in the Koran, the exalted: “God is your Lord and he is the best helper?”’

They continue to discuss the general aspect of affairs for a little while longer. That heap of papers on the bed contains reports of the state of feeling in every regiment of the Bengal Army; communications from kings and princes who have lost their thrones or are trembling for them; from great landowners who have lost all their power and influence; from very big men who have become very small ones; from treacherous employés of the Government; from Rohilkhund, Bundelkhund, Oudh, Bengal, the Punjab, from Caubul and from Persia—nay, the Begum’s correspondence extends even so far as Constantinople. She refers to a document which exhibits the distribution and strength of the English (as distinguished from the native) troops throughout Northern India.

‘See how few there are! One regiment here, one regiment there. They could be dealt with separately. They would not have time to join together. How simple the whole matter is!’

The Begum loves business and has a great capacity for it. The secret preparations of a conspiracy and the sudden outburst—the stealthy stalk of the tiger and then the bold spring—exactly suit her turn of character, very cunning and very bold.

Then they turn to the consideration of local affairs.

‘You are sure of your own regiment?’

‘*Khoob* (well, thoroughly).’

‘And the 76th?’

‘That is favourable too. Most of the sepoys are Brahmins. The general service order is very irksome to them. You know they refused to go to Burma three years ago.’

‘But I do not trust that infidel, Matadeen Panday, the Soubahdar Major. He is quite capable of betraying us to the English.’

‘Quite, if he thought he would gain anything by it. But he would not. He knows the English officers would not listen to him ; would not believe him ; would probably punish him for defaming his comrades. Ha ! ha ! They do not wish to hear anything against the sepoy. They do not want to be troubled.’

‘But what will make us sure of his co-operation when the time for action comes?’

‘Rupees,’ says Rustum Khan, laconically.

‘I could promise him titles and an estate.’

‘He would prefer cash down.’

‘True ; the titles and estate might not be given,’ says the Begum with a laugh. ‘But we have not much command of money just now. This pig of a Milmil (Melvil) Sahib keeps us very *tung* (tight), and the kafirs of Hindoo bankers refuse us credit since he has given it out that the Government will no longer be responsible for our debts.’

‘You have your jewels.’

Rustum Khan knew some of the Begum’s secrets. He knew that the strong-box or coffer beyond the bed contained a great store of most valuable jewels and gems. The Begum had accumulated these not merely for the adornment of her person, though that was an object too. She had devoted herself to gathering them together in order to gratify her greed and love of power more than her vanity. She valued them as concentrated wealth ; as secret wealth ; as portable wealth. They gave her money at her own command ; enabled her to carry out her own purposes ; provided against a possible day of disaster. She had worked on the Nuwâb’s inability to refuse, as well as on his affection for her. She had made purchases of specially valuable gems herself, and left the Nuwâb and his English custodian to arrange for their payment. Mr. Melvil’s determined opposition to this process was another great cause of her bitter hatred towards him.

‘I must see what value the kafir sets on his services,’ says the Begum. By the kafir she meant Matadeen Panday.

The evening glare has disappeared ; the brief twilight is passing away ; the stars are beginning to come out.

‘But where is the bird?’ exclaims Rustum Khan, who has risen and strolled towards the window.

‘Flown away. That black-visaged, that — slave-girl Chunia allowed it to escape ; my beautiful bird, the like to which there was none other in Hindostan.’

The dash takes the place of a term of abuse common enough in India, but too gross, too shameless, to find translation here.

‘You have punished her for it?’

‘I tickled her back a little,’ says the Begum, indifferently.

‘You must get another bird.’

‘If that strayer from the paths of righteousness, that son of Satan, that oppressor, that skinflint of a Milmil (Melvil) Sahib will sanction the expenditure for it. Why, the other day he would not allow my son to purchase a pair of greyhounds; he said their cost was too high. A prince not able to buy a dog! The oppressor keeps a very minute account with us. I am keeping a very minute account with him. There may be a settlement of it soon. Oh, Rustum Khan, would that the day of our power were come!’

‘It may be very near at hand,’ he says. And then they have done with politics for that time, and exchange its dry discourse for the soft language of Love.

Rustum Khan has to be back in his lines before the gun on the ridge has sent forth its last, its evening roar. But he must have a swagger down Star Street first. That far-famed thoroughfare is now at its gayest and brightest. The oil-lamps twinkle in all its shops. The bright moonlight floods it. It is filled with a vast concourse of people all moving joyously about after the monotonous languor of the day.

(To be continued.)

THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY.

I. OF MR. RUDYARD KIPLING.

A SLIGHT INACCURACY.

THIS is not a tale. It is a conversation which I had with a complete stranger. If you ask me why I talked to him, I have no very good reason to give. I would simply tell you to spend three hours of solitude in that same compartment on that same line. You may not know the line; which is neither your loss nor the company's gain. I do, and I had spent three hours alone on it. And at the end of three hours I longed for human converse. I was prepared to talk Persian poetry to an assistant commissioner; I was ready to talk to anyone about anything; I would have talked to a pariah dog; talked kindly, too.

So when the complete stranger got in I began at once. You see, I did not know then that he was an inaccurate young man. I thought he was a nicely-dressed, average specimen. It never does to judge from appearances. I once knew a T. G., or, rather, Tranter of the Bombay side knew him . . . but that is another story. First we talked weather, and then we talked horse. He smoked my cheroots, and I told him several things which were quite true. He began to look a little uneasy, as if he were not used to that kind of talk. Then he told me the story of the little mare which he bought in Calcutta. He gave Rs. 175 for her. It was thought by his friends at the time that he had been too generous; she had a very bad cough and a plaintive look in the eyes.

'I have now had her for two years,' he said, slowly removing my cheroot from his lips, 'and she has not got over that cough yet. She also continues to look plaintive. But she is fast. The other day I drove her sixty miles along the road in an *ekka*.'

I was given to understand that the time had been five hours, twenty minutes, and a decimal. Well, a country-bred mare will go almost any pace you like to ask. I should have thought about believing the man if he had not put in the decimal. As it was, I never really wanted to call him a liar until he picked up the book which I had been reading. It was a copy of 'Plain Tales from

the Hills,' and it lay on the seat by my side. I have a liking for that book, and I often read it. It is a good book.

'Can you understand,' he asked, 'why that book is so popular in England? Perhaps you will allow me to explain. I understand books as well as I understand horses and men. First, note this. Even in your schooldays you probably saw the difference between the prose of Cicero and the conversational Latin of Plautus.'

This last remark enabled me to place the man. He was, it seemed, a full-sized Oxford prig. They are fond of throwing their education about like that. Which is loathly in them. But they do it. I explained to him that I had never been to school.

'Well, then, to come down to your level,' he continued. 'You have read English books, and you must have seen that written English is not like spoken English. When we speak, for instance—to take quite a minor point—we often put a full stop before the relative clauses—add them as an afterthought.'

Which struck me as being true.

'But when we write we only put a comma. The author of "Plain Tales from the Hills" saw this, and acted on the principle. He punctuated his writing as he did his speaking; and used more full stops than any man before him. Which was genius.'

I think—I am not sure, but I think—that at this point I blushed.

'Secondly, the public want to be mystified. They like references to things of which they have never heard. They read the sporting papers for that reason. So this man wrote Anglo-Indian life, and put very little explanation into it. It was all local colour. Do you suppose the average cockney knows what "P. W. D. accounts" are? Of course he doesn't. But he likes to be treated as if he did. The author noted this point. And that also shows genius. Thirdly, the public do *not* like the good man, nor do they like the bad man. They like the man-who-has-some-good-in-him-after-all. "I am cynical," says our author, "and desperately worldly, and somewhat happy-go-lucky, yet I, the same man, am interested in children. Witness my story of Tods and my great goodness to Muhammed Din. With all my cynicism I have a kind heart. Was I not kind even unto Jellaludin? I am the man-who-has-some-good-in-him-after-all." Love me! Genius again. Fourthly, take the subject-matter—soldiers, horses, and flirts. Of these three the public never weary. It may not have

been genius to have seen that. And the public like catch-words. I knew a girl once who did the serio-comic business at the . . . but that is another story. To recognise the beauty of catch-words may not be genius either. But it *is* genius to say more than you know, and to seem to know more than you say—to be young and to seem old. There are people who are connected with the Government of India who are so high that no one knows anything about them except themselves, and their own knowledge is very superficial. Is our author afraid? Not a bit. He speaks of them with freedom but with vagueness. He says Up Above. And the public admire the freedom, and never notice the vagueness. Bless the dear public!’

The train and the complete stranger stopped simultaneously. I was not angry. ‘How do you come to know the workings of the author’s mind?’ I asked.

I put this question calmly, and I waited to see him shrivel.

He never shrivelled. He was getting his gun-case out from under the seat. ‘I am the author,’ he said blandly. ‘Good afternoon.’ Then he got out.

He was so bland that I should have quite believed him if I had not written the book myself. As it is, I feel by no means sure about it.

Which is curious.

II. OF MR. JOHN RUSKIN.

FROM LECTURE I.—ARROWROOT.

49. EAT! Nay, you do not eat. I do not know why any man of us under heaven should talk about eating. We spend our money—the money of a great nation—on filthy fossils and bestial pictures; on party journals and humiliating charities; on foolish books and gas-lit churches. And on solid, honest beef we will spend nothing, unless we are driven by necessity; and, even then, there are those who content them with frozen mutton, the fat of which is base and inferior. I do not think there is any sadder sight in this world than a nation without appetite.

I have pointed out to-night that the meat and vegetables which you have despised—nay, which you are daily despising—go to form part of the body; and that the brain is a part of the body; and that on the brain all just conceptions depend. So far we found that the scientist was with us. I left him dazed and

trembling, hesitating on the verge of conclusions which I have not feared to state quite plainly. If you forget every other word that I have said, remember at least those conclusions; for I do feel that they are significant and important to every one of us. I will state them once more. *The brain-life increases with the amount we eat. If we would have just conceptions, we must devour seven solid meat-meals a day.* You do not do it. You cannot, in any true sense, be said to eat. Why do you thus neglect your duty? Have patience with me a little longer, and I will show you why.

I say, firstly, that with most of us this thing is a physical impossibility. We trifle in some sort with three, or, at the most, four meat-meals, and we dare to say that we eat. I do not wish to speak wildly or harshly. On the contrary, the wonder to me is that we can do what we do on the little that we take. But have we not fallen very low when, in our struggle upwards, we find ourselves blocked by a physical impossibility? Secondly, we are the victims of the insanity of avarice. How long most people would look at the largest turbot before they would give the price of a first folio of Shakespeare for it! We venture even to ask the blessing of heaven on lentil soup and a slice of jam pudding. For what do you suppose is the cause of this consuming white leprosy of vegetarian restaurants which has broken out all over our fair land? Lentil soup is cheap, and for that reason we allow it to take the place of nobler food. Every day I see in your streets some fresh sign of this insanity. I see men go forth from their houses and pollute the pure morning air with the breath of their filthy lungs, when that same breath might be sweetened and disinfected with the aroma of a *Villar y villar*. Is this offence against nature excusable on any plea of economy?

Lastly. You are influenced by fashion. There is no need of words of mine for proof of this. I will say nothing of fashion, and I will not chide you. I know that you are weak, and the knowledge saddens me. I will only ask you to let me read to you four lines of true poetry:—

Her eyes were deeper than the depths
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Aye, and even to-night it may be that this blessed damozel looks down upon us from heaven's golden bar. Can you not

picture the sorrow that must be in her eyes? Can you be any longer content that your meat-meals shall be as the lilies, and not as the stars in number? Remember this, my friends: *The lilies look up to the stars.*

50. What, then, shall we do? I have now spoken to you for several hours, and I must bring my lecture to an end. I have drawn my bow at a venture; I have shot my arrow; I shall find it after many days; not, as the poet sings, in the heart of an oak, but in the root of our national degradation. That, indeed, is one of the reasons why I called this lecture 'Arrowroot.' What shall we do? The night is here, in which no man can either work or eat. For the present, my friends, our holiest act will be to go to bed. And if, as you lie there to-night, sleep refuses to come to you, take refuge in no vile drugs, no doctor's narcotics. Drink rather of the pure arrowroot; in other words, read a few pages of this lecture, which I have had printed by an entirely honest man, as well as he can do it, and which will be sold for a just price at the door of the hall. So shall you sleep well.

And on the morrow may we wake, you and I, with fresh strength and a better appetite.

III. OF MR. R. D. BLACKMORE.

CHRIS AND CHRISIE.

At this my uncle raised himself slowly from his chair. All his actions were slow and deliberate, not from laziness or rheumatics, from which two complaints he never suffered, but because he would undertake nothing without due care and forethought. And this was one of the reasons why he was so respected that his opinion was constantly being asked in the village, and his orchards were never robbed except in unusually good seasons, when the fine sense of the Lonton boys pointed out to them that the jargonelles were unduly plentiful, and should be thinned, in order to promote more thankfulness for the remainder.

He went straight to the little corner cupboard where the cigars were kept, drew his bunch of keys with the yellow labels on them from his pocket, and attempted to unlock the door with the key of the little tool-house that stood at the south end of the garden, just where the Lonton Brook entered our land; being, in fact, a little short-sighted, but unwilling to acknowledge the fact

from humility, lest he should be credited with a greater age than it had pleased Providence to give him. He found the right key at last, and got the door open. There were two boxes—one of threepenny and one of sixpenny. That, at least, was the way he distinguished them, having a hearty contempt for all foreign names and fal-lals, as became a good English market-gardener with land of his own and the third best pew in the village church. Now these cigars were a luxury, upon the purchase of which my uncle never would have embarked knowingly; but the unforeseen overtakes us in many ways, and assuredly it had overtaken my uncle in the matter of these cigars. His head-man, Long Jim, had showed such misplaced confidence in human nature as to send bushel after bushel of early kidneys up to the 'Green Lion' as fast as the landlord, a man of no principle, liked to order them. Now it was well known all over Lonton that the 'Green Lion' was in a failing way, the beer being inferior and the house standing too far back from the coach-road. At any rate, as no money was forthcoming, my uncle had been compelled to take the 'Green Lion's' entire stock of cigars instead; and though it grieved him at the time, he found them useful afterwards to mark occasions.

'Which shall it be, Chris; threepenny or sixpenny?' he said. 'Chris, you're a good lad, and you're going to marry a sensible girl with no nonsense about her. So it shall be a sixpenny. Chris, my boy, you shall see me smoke a sixpenny in honour of your Chrissie.'

I thanked him humbly, feeling quite sure now that he considered it a great occasion and one of which he approved. For the sixpennies not only cost twice as much as the others, but did not entirely suit him, being very full in flavour and (it was thought by those who had had the good luck to try them) a trifle out of condition. I made a paper spill and lit his cigar for him, and mixed him a second glass of rum-and-water without saying anything about it. He did not seem to notice what I had done, but he sipped it cheerfully. He only allowed himself one glass every night; sometimes I took upon myself to mix him a second, when the weather had been wayward, and he seemed to me to require consolation. He always chid me for doing it; but, being a sensible man, and knowing that there should be no bad blood between near relations, he would finally forgive me and drink the liquor; for he knew that, if he did not drink it, it would fall to the portion of our old servant Martha, and that rum-and-water

was too high feeding for that spirited old dame. At this moment Martha tapped at the door and entered. She told us that Long Jim had just come back from Birstock, that he had put up the cart and seen to the pony, and that she had given him supper, as ordered. Further, that Long Jim had eaten two pounds of solid beef, but had not touched the undercut, having been duly instructed that the undercut was not for the likes of him; that he had drunk therewith three pints of the second-best ale; that he seemed to have something on his mind, and had hardly spoken; and that he sent his respects and compliments, and would like to speak to Master Chris.'

'I will go to him,' I said, starting up.

'No, no,' said my uncle, with a natural feeling that Long Jim was his property and had no business to speak at all, except in his presence and after encouragement; 'show him in here.'

Long Jim's real name was James Long. But he had been called Long Jim from his great height. He was a thin, dry, humble, dejected man. He had a large family, and worked hard for them; and was treated with a good deal of loving contempt by his busy little wife. He came shambling into the room with his hat in one hand, and gazed sheepishly first at my uncle and then at myself.

'You may sit down, James Long,' said my uncle, 'and tell me what you have to say.'

He seated himself awkwardly: 'There be a wise woman come to Birstock, and she do say that there be rain more'n enow to fall next Lord's Day, an' it seemeth.'

'Jim,' I struck in, for I could see his manner, 'you're lying. Tell us the truth, and don't shirk it.'

'Miss Chrissie Greenhouse hath left her home, and no man knoweth where she be, no, not one on 'em, nor why she hath done it.'

I do not quite know what happened next. My uncle shaded his eyes with one hand, as if the glare of the candles hurt them. I felt that I must do something, or die. So I drank my uncle's rum-and-water. I could hear poor Jim blubbering. My uncle was the first to speak.

'James Long, be quiet.' I never before had seen my uncle look so brave and noble as he did then. 'Where are we?'

'In the first vollum,' sobbed Jim.

'Then we must at once get on a false scent, and, to do that,

we must have a detective. We must keep on with the false scent all through the second volume, and find the right trail about the beginning of the third. Bear up, Chris, my boy. We're all right because we're in a novel. Have a cigar. Have a six—I mean, have a threepenny cigar.'

It was my first cigar. While I smoked it, we discussed our plans.

'George Bradby is at the bottom of this,' I said. My uncle slapped his knee. 'You're right, Chris. Of course, he isn't really,' he added in a whisper, 'but we must keep it up.'

'Else there'll be no second vollum,' said Jim sadly.

IV. OF MR. WALTER PATER.

MARIUS AT SLOANE STREET.

ABOVE all, there was at this time a desire abroad to attain that which was best. It had spread over the country like a great wave; its furthest ripple reaching even to the lower and more common minds, and awakening in them an intelligent seriousness, a newer and brighter perception of their own immediate good, and the will to secure it at any cost to others. It seemed, as it were, a stray fragrance from the old school of Cyrene, blown by some petulant wind down the ages, and lighting at last upon this weary, overwrought civilisation. At least this lucent, flamelike devotion to self—this strenuous, almost feverish worship of the ego—was there, vividly present amongst men, and like to some new religion in its animating power. And if upon its high altar the happiness of others had to be sacrificed to personal and individual ends, that sacrifice was ever made—as, indeed, all such must be made—in perfect simplicity and hopefulness. There was no tetchy, fretful complaining. The individual and his ideal being one, his holiest act was to please himself. All that was lost, with that purpose, was well lost; the highest and purest form of asceticism was the utter devotion to self.

Marius—susceptible, as he had ever been, to all sweet influences—found himself strangely dominated by the beauty of this new spirit. Standing at the corner of the old *Via Sloanensis*, he felt almost faint with the longing to do something—a little thing, perhaps, but still something—to show how he loved himself. The public vehicles—snow-white or scarlet, sapphire or peach-

colour—passed before him in gorgeous procession from the distant circus. To him—as, indeed, to others—each colour had an inner meaning, and was not only decorative. It was an appeal, a voice that called :

‘Come into us. Be part of us. Come to the dreamy south or to the burning west. Come all the way, all the way!’

The afternoon had been broken by showers, the wind only half-drying the pavement before another torrent came; and Marius noted the ardent and special apprehension of the *subsellia interiora* of these vehicles, and the musical chant of *Plenum intra! Plenum intra!* Yes, even in this crowd of quite ordinary and common people, the new spirit was showing itself. The renunciation of others for self, that true sacrifice, was made again and again, willingly and cheerfully, each time that one of these public vehicles stopped.

A chance gave Marius his opportunity, and he at once decided to take it. ‘I am going from this wet weariness,’ he said to Cornelius, who stood by his side. ‘In yonder vehicle there is room for one only; I shall be that one; and you, dear friend, will wait for the next.’

Without another word he pushed his way through the throng. Never had he been more conscious of his strength, his great, fiery manhood. Carelessly enough he flung from the step of the vehicle some daughter of the people who would have anticipated him. He had not noticed that she was not alone. Afterwards he could remember but little of what next happened. His capacity for receiving exquisite physical impressions seemed suddenly satiated by some intense experience. He was only conscious of quick movement; and then he knew that he had seated himself in the road, and that the people were crowding about him. For a few seconds he seemed to be living too quickly, too keenly.

‘What has happened?’ he gasped, with a look of mad appeal.

‘You have been kicked,’ said Cornelius simply, as he helped him to his feet.

‘Ah!’ He limped away with the young soldier. ‘I have indeed been kicked,’ he said very slowly. Then, as the fulness and sharpness of the sensation became more convincing, he burst out: ‘*Vixi! Vixi!* And where is the nearest temple of *Æsculapius?*’

V. OF COUNT LYOF N. TOLSTOL.

DONOVITCH'S CONFESSION (SHOCKINGLY TRANSLATED).

DONOVITCH uttered two sighs, and for some time remained silent. His face had become longer, and there was more of his mouth. His ears twitched. It was frightful. Two passengers who had been going on to Liverpool Street got out at Charing Cross. I think they said that they would go on by the next 'bus. One of them was a young woman; she wore a green hat. It has nothing to do with the story or anything else, and that is why I mention it. I am a Russian realist, and in a fair way of business. Admire, and pass on.

'Music is an awful thing,' he went on at last. 'What is it? Why does it do what it does? What is there in his wife's musical evening that makes the husband to be detained on business? Answer me that. You cannot? I will tell you, because I *know*. People say that music causes *ennui*; that it bores; also, that it occasionally distracts. Lies, lies, lies—all lies! It elevates the soul. That is why music is so dangerous and acts at times in so peculiar a manner. If one's soul is elevated too far—how am I to express myself?—if one's soul passes out of one's reach, one has to get along without it until it comes down again.

'On that particular morning it was bright and sunny. I felt light, but prescient; I knew that the Italian would come again, and that something would happen. I want you to see that I was not entirely myself even before the Italian came. New feelings, new qualities suddenly declared themselves within me. What was I experiencing? Dyspepsia? I cannot say. The Italian came at eleven o'clock. I hated him—hated his black hair and coarse face—hated the mechanical piano with the green baize covering—hated the immoral monkey which sat on the top. I would not let them see that I hated them. I was too proud for that, but my heart swelled. It was very painful, but I kept quiet. I was determined to be perfectly natural; so I went to the sideboard and drank a glass of *vodka*. Then I lit a cigarette; I thought that it would deaden the feeling. I said to my soul: "Soul, don't move. Stop where you are. Refuse to be elevated." Yet I must confess that directly he began to play "See-saw" I felt my control over myself lapsing from me. I went to the

window and looked at the Italian. I can see him now—a man in robust health, well nourished, with horrible red lips, turning a handle. Do you know "See-saw"? They always play it at the circus when the two performing dogs are fooling about at opposite ends of a plank. Every bar sends the soul up with a jerk; you will not believe me, but there is a point at which one positively wishes the music to stop. With me, that point was reached very soon. I flung open the window and said distinctly: "Go away. Go quite away, and leave my soul alone, can't you?" I do not think the Italian understood. His monkey grinned. Oh, why did it grin? It ought not to have grinned. It is immoral to grin. In China monkeys are only allowed to grin on important occasions. Here they do it in the open street, with young girls passing every minute. Do let us be moral! Have you never thought what the effect *must* be on the cab-horses? The Italian changed his tune. It was a florid arrangement of a music-hall song—I forget by what composer. I turned back into the room and flung myself on a sofa. I sobbed, but I do not know why. Then I put on my boots, and smoked two cigarettes at once, to deaden the feeling. I may tell you that I knew very well now what I was going to do; it was all planned in my mind just as it actually happened. Yet if he had stopped playing at that moment all might have been well. He did not stop, he began to play "Annie Rooney."

'I crept with soft, wolf-like steps into the hall. I took from the umbrella-stand a slightly curved Damascus blade which had never been used, and which was extremely sharp. It had been intended for the water-rate, but now I had another use for it. Then I put on my hat and went out. I do not remember how I got out of the front door and into the street. I cannot say how I moved, whether I walked or ran. I remember nothing of all that. I remember only the expression of the Italian's face as I stepped towards him, holding the dagger behind me. It was an expression of terror—absolute, abject terror. I was glad to see it. The monkey looked annoyed, and darted a quick look of interrogation at his master. Suddenly the Italian smiled, and assuming an air of indifference so false as to be ludicrous, said: "We was giving you a little music."

'He did not finish his sentence. I felt the need of giving free course to my rage. With a sudden cry I flung myself upon

him. I must have frightened him dreadfully, for he became as white as a sheet; he ran away accompanied by the monkey.

"You are poltroons, poltroons!" I shouted after them. I did not care much, because the mechanical piano was there. I took it by the handle with both hands and shook it convulsively. The contact was repulsive, but I felt driven to it. It shrieked terribly. Then I felt that this was not enough; it did not satisfy me. I raised my dagger and struck it twice in the "Annie Rooney" section. It never struggled. There was a jet of warm arpeggios, and then it was still. I crept back again to the house, and smoked some more cigarettes. Then I went to sleep. I slept for two days.'

Donovitch ceased, and buried his head in his hands.

'This is Liverpool Street,' I remarked.

He rose hurriedly, to descend from the 'bus, tumbled down the flight of steps and broke his silly neck.

I am a respectable Russian realist, but I *was* glad.

ON HELVELLYN WITH THE SHEPHERDS.

It was a 'dark morning,' as we say in Cumberland, that first Monday after the twentieth of July, that had been fixed in the Shepherds' Calendar for the day of 'give and take' on the Helvellyn range.

But, nothing daunted, we took our seats on the coach, rose the great hill, and, leaving the white water of Bassenthwaite and the purple wall of Barf beyond the Crosthwaite valley to their gloom, set our faces toward the grey-green ridges of the mighty Helvellyn, and hoped that the day would mend.

What a shepherd the sun is in July! How he drives his fleecy flock up the heights! We had hardly passed through the Naddle valley, scented with the elder flowers, still gay with its rain-drenched wild roses, ere the whole long wavy back of 'the yellow moorland'—for so men say Helvellyn means—stood free of cloud; and, far beyond the gleaming bastion of the Castle Rock and the tiny wart upon the sky-line of the 'Watch Crag,' we could see the dim zigzag of the miners' path that leads from Stanah to the shepherds' place of assembly.

And what is the Shepherds' Assembly? And why assemble up there so near the clouds? Cannot these sons of the mountain descend to the commonplace levels of our valley life for their 'moot,' their 'thing,' their parliament?

Are not shepherds' legs capable of feeling at all the tug up hill to such a gathering-place? Are their hearts made of different stuff to ours? Or do the gods live there—Terminus and the lords of the boundaries have there their habitation?

St. Blasius help us! We know that you, the shepherd saint, are in the secret, for your name is upon the hillside in Patterdale, and even in this vale you have left upon a fell that fronts Helvellyn memorial of your tutelary power.

But St. Blasius keeps a discreet silence, and we must just go to the shepherds themselves to learn the history of their meeting, and the why and the wherefore of their place of mountain assembly.

'Stanah lonnin' end!' cried the coachman; and, leaving the coach, we were soon sitting in the old-fashioned kitchen of one of

the oldest-fashioned farmhouses in that part of the country, for old fashion was stamped on all its surroundings. The wormwood we had noted was sweet at the door, the beck we heard thundering by to the watering-dub. The old-fashioned cheese-press, with its great stone and its primitive lever, stood in the shadow of the peat-house; the bedroom staircase was built out in a circular stone-hooded building that abutted on the house, and the stair was just rough flagging from the mountain quarry. Upon the walls hung the bright, shining iron oven-spade; the oaken aumbry and meal-ark were seen in the wall, and the rafters were close enough to the head of our stalwart host to make one tremble, as he passed in and out of his cosy room getting ready for his mountain ascent.

He had 'partly what' known of our coming, so had sent on a man with the 'woolled 'uns' that he had gathered on the fell in the early morn, and himself waited to be our escort. So 'haver bread' was brought, and 'a gay fine lock' of milk, and as we ate and drank we learnt something of the mystery of the shepherds' meeting.

'Well, you ken varra weel that oor sheep are aw "heaf-gaen" sheep. And now and agean a dog gets loose and hounds 'em, or a galloway gits amang 'em from Threlkeld common, and sheep gits a bit scared, and yan on 'em mebbe doesn't coom back to its heaf, but strays until anudder's heaf—gits lost, ya kna—and sea, at sarten times in t' year, shepherds meets at sarten plaaces, and each brings back ony sheep that disn't beleng him, and taks back ony that dis. It's fair giv' and tak', yan may saay, and best on it is thoo's nowt to pay neather, nobbut if yan doesn't attend t' meeting, and than their's hauf-a-croon agean you, and weel sarved and aw. And that gaes towarts lunch and what not. Dar bon! But we must be off, or they'll likely be fining me and aw, for not being at t' meeting.'

We rose—our mouths still white with the milk, and dusty from the haver bread—passed through the 'intake' and over the bridge by the sheep-washing pool, and on to the miners' path; thence by the foaming 'Stane Ea' or Stanah Ghyll we went, wondering what multitudes of miners, as they passed up to the Sticks pass to go to the Glenridding mines, had worn the zigzag 'trod' so deep.

'It was nut miners at aw; it was the sleds that browt the peats doon hereaway that wore that trod,' said our friend. 'Eh

my! but what a number of years must folk heve aboot heer bin content wi' peat for coal. Richardson—ye've hard tell o' Richardson o' St. John's—he hes a bit aboot it in his poem "A crack aboot auld times"—

She sed, for eldin, peats they hed,
Browt meastly doon fra' t' hee fell tops.

Eh my! but it was no easy matther gitting in store of eldin in them daays.'

'But,' said a lady at my side, 'what do you mean by "heaf-gaen" sheep?' And the courteous dalesman, a gentleman every inch of him, at once dropped the rich Cumbrian accent, as if condescending to the gentler, less fellside—accustomed sex, and spoke as follows:—

'You know the fells on which our flocks are pastured have no walls upon them to separate pasture from pasture: Helvellyn is just one long common, as you may call it, from end to end. The farms in the dales have, by an old kind of prescriptive right, dating from some general agreement centuries ago, so many sheep attached to them. When we let a farm, we say it is let with so many sheep, or so much stinted pasture. For all Helvellyn is divided into pastures which are stinted in the number of sheep allowed to graze on them. My stints carry 250 sheep; Bridge-end stints allow of 600; Thirlspot stints carry 250; Dale-head 400 head, and so on. The flocks, by mutual consent, are never allowed to exceed this number, or they would press one on another, and stray off to find pasture beyond their own proper boundary. Indeed, as it is now, if a flock of fellside sheep grows weak and becomes less than its full value, we find that the stronger flocks on either side encroach at once upon its pasture. These separate pastures, though they have no walls to divide them, are very clearly marked out by usage and tradition in our minds, and are called "heafs;" we all know our separate "heafs," and we train our flocks to know them too.'

'But what does "heaf" mean?' The yeoman was puzzled. How should he know that? The word 'heaf' had probably come down to him through centuries of use from the old Danish 'hof,' which meant a courtyard or garth, or the Anglo-Saxon 'hofs,' and that probably signified a place of shelter or domicile—in short, a home. But he, without knowing Danish or Anglo-Saxon, at least had an instinctive knowledge of what the word 'heaf' ought to mean, for he continued: 'You see, mountain sheep are very like human

beings, they know there's no place like home; and if once a lamb has been suckled upon a particular pasture it will never of its own accord leave it, and we call that place its "heaf." We had a young gentleman not long since staying with us, who said that he thought that our "heafing" our sheep was very like the "hiving" of bees, and he suspected that the words meant the same thing. I don't know whether he was right or wrong, but this I do know, that one of our neighbour's lamb's mother died after it had been on the high fell there, away right at the back of Helvellyn, and it was brought down into the homestead at eight weeks old, and kept down there all the year in the valley, and never offered to leave; but it was missed in the spring, about the time that sheep take to going to the high fells, and was found, as sure as I am here, there miles away back on its own heaf." What a memory, thought I, of home; what truth is in the saying that in youth impressions are made for life! Here was a lamb that probably had not been more than six weeks upon the pasture where it was heafed or homed—for the mothers do not generally leave the intakes for the fells till the lambs are a fortnight old—and all through the long year the lamb's eyes had been, as it were, lifted to the hills, and how the dawn rose and the sunset fell above the Mosedale moorland and the heights of Helvellyn had never been quite forgotten by the little motherless thing.

'This love of home-going or heaf-ganging among the mountain sheep is as remarkable as is wonderful their knowledge of the just boundaries of their heafs or pasture-homes.

'The saying is, "whar a lamb sucks, there it will be,"' added our yeoman friend; 'and if, at the time when we drive our flocks back to the fells, we just opened our fold-gates and let them go, they would find their way back to their separate heafs, I'll warrant them, without a mistake. I have known one of our thrunters, or three-winter-old ewes, sold to a man at Cockermouth for "butching"; he sold it to a Lorton man, and what, you'll hardly believe it!—the ewe came right over the Whinlatter pass, down through Braithwaite, and then she must have waited till dusk, and come through the streets of Keswick and up over Castrigg, and so, by the very path we are climbing, to join the flock on the "heaf" above our heads.'

As our friend spoke we rested by an old sheepfold at the top of the steep ascent and gazed back wonderingly over the Naddle vale and hills, away to Bassenthwaite and the great littoral plain

that swept towards the Solway white as silver. The Armboth fells that Arnold knew, the Thirlmere lake that Faber sang of, and by which Rossetti mused, gleamed dark and purple beneath the sea of heavy mist that swam or hovered above it. A raven cried and dogs barked.

'Yes,' rejoined a shepherd, who was resting on his way up to the meeting at the fold, 'I've kenned some of them Scotchmen travelling all the way back from oor fells to theer 'oan beyont t' border. And one Willie White, him as was "shep" at Greta Hall years sen, had a tip from Mardale, and lost him, and next thing he heard tell of him was, that t' tip was seen swimming t' Ullswater lake, ebbin anenst Gowbarrow Park—he was ganging to his oan "heaf," bainest way, was tip. And it's a varra sensible thing and aw, is it, that sheep should know theer oan "heafs," we could nivver ken whar sheep was at if they didn't. Why, bless ye, oor sheep ken theer pastures to within a hundred yards, and if yan from a neighbour flock cooms in amang them, they're nut owre satisfyt wi' it, I can tell ye. I'se not agoing to saay that, if it's a lamb or a young hogg, they'll mell of it, but if it's a full-grawn 'un they'll seun show that its room is a gay deal more weel-liket than its coompany; sheep is varra sensible things.'

'But, then,' I said, 'surely these sheep can't detect one another's particular marks, the punch-marks in the ears, the horn-burns?' 'Noa, noa, but they ken varra weel t' feace on 'em, just as a man knows the feace of his friend; and they sniff a deal round a straanger, they seun know what flock he's been amang by t' smell on 'em. But there are two things that plague us shepherds a deal in keeping our flocks to their "heafs"—dogs and gallo-ways. Let a dog come houndin' a "heaf" one day in three months, and the sheep seem always to have the fear of that dog on 'em, and they seem to be flayte and restless, shy of their heaf; and, if one of those mountain ponies that they breed in Threlkeld pastures or the moors out Greystoke way come on to these Helvellyn pastures, they fairly scare t' life out o' sheep, and flocks get mixed all t' way along Helvellyn to t' Raise. You see, the ponies like the sweet grass and follow it, and lambs like it and follow it, but whar the ponies coom sheep will not stay.'

'Then,' said I, 'it looks to me very much as if the tourists who cross the fells might do you damage.' 'Eh, dear, that would they, if they bring a dog that is not well to heel with them, but it's not a varra deal o' dogs as cooms into t' country; ya see,

dogs knows nowt about Wudswuth and the like, and folks that climbs fells for luv of him cooms wi'out dogs for the meast part. If one of our dogs takes to houndin' fells we put him down; and it's shepherd meetings as keeps flocks reight eftther aw.'

I asked how.

'Why, you see,' broke in the yeoman, 'after all, our fellside shepherd system is one of goodwill and good neighbourhood, and our meetings help that way.

'There is no rule which can oblige me to heaf or home my flock on any particular pasture; as a commoner or tenant of the lord I can claim equal rights of pasturage on all the common of Helvellyn, subject to the lord of the manor and his court's ruling. If some one else who was a commoner chose to settle or heaf his sheep on my heaf I could not prevent him, but custom and good-fellowship prevent him. And so my sheep are left in undisturbed possession of their home, which they have had for generations of years.

'Of course it's a bit tempting at times to get a nibble off a neighbour's heaf, but then goodwill prevents one giving way to the temptation, and there is such strong feeling of honour and trust among the shepherds, that they would never take occasion, even in the absence of all strict law to prevent them, to trespass with their sheep on any neighbour's home.'

It takes a good man to make a good shepherd!

'Ah, sir, I don't a bit a wonder that we read of shepherds being trusted in the Bible. I tell you, the shepherd's life on our high fells is a life of trust from cradle to grave. I have read of one they called Michael, whom Mr. Wordsworth wrote about, building his fold, just such another as this one here, there away in Green-head Ghyll. I don't wonder he wrote about him. I think a good shepherd is as grand a charactered a man as you will find all the country through.' And as he said this, my friend's eyes fairly flashed. 'I doan't mean to say,' he added, 'that there are not black sheep among them. There was one who lived in the dale below here stole sheep; there is another went wrong Caldbeck way last year, and one I read of in the papers only a week or two since, a sheep-stealer, Kendal way; but as a set of men I will say this, that the high fell shepherd has to be a gentleman before he can be a shepherd; conscientious and honourable, and kind and neighbourly. We could never grow wool another year on Helvellyn if it were not so.'

'But, then,' said I, 'what are these shepherd meetings, and how do they minister to this feeling of good neighbourhood?'

'You shall see presently,' my friend replied. 'That man ahead of us, carrying a lamb on his shoulders, will find it a heavy load before he has reached the place of meeting, for Stybarrow pass is 2,500 feet above the sea, and we meet on Stybarrow Dodd, above the top of the pass; but I'll be bound he'll carry it whole way up, and all for love. He has found it straying on his "heaf" among his flock, and he will take it to restore it to its rightful owner. You know we miss some sheep at all gathering times, or times when we bring them off the fells, whether for washing in June, for clipping in July, for dipping and sauving in October. At such times we miss some that have strayed and find others that do not belong to us, and so we Helvellyn flock-masters agree to meet three times a year; once here on the first Monday after the 20th July, on Stybarrow Dodd above the Sticks pass, and we bring to that meeting the stray sheep that we have found, mostly woolled ones, and give and take. I daresay as many as 100 or 150 sheep will be returned to their native heafs to-day. We all meet again on the first Monday in October in Mosedale Ghyll, by the side of the road that leads from Wallthwaite to Dockray, and give and take to one another any strayed ones again. That meeting is mostly for lambs.

'And once again we come together to what we call "Shepherds' Feast," and have a hunt—hare hunt or fox hunt, as t' case may be—and dine together and arrange matters, and again bring any strayed sheep we may have found upon our heafs. That feast takes place at Thirlspot one year to accommodate the shepherds on the west side of Helvellyn, and at Dockray, in Matterdale, the other year, for the convenience of the men who live on the east side. The feast is fixed for the first Thursday after old Martinmas, towards the latter part of November.'

'But how do you ensure attendance at the meetings?' I asked.

'We have a fine of 2s. 6d. for all who do not attend, and then there is a collection of 6d. a head for luncheon upon the fell, and we pay 3s. 6d. each for our dinner at the time of the feast. At times we find a "woolled one" on the fell after a shepherds' meeting, then we just shear it, scale the fleece and allow the owner a price, or tell him he can have it if he calls. After this meeting to-day, the shepherds will never go on to the fells without

their shears slung round their necks, for the purpose of saving their neighbours trouble and loss.' I saw, as he spoke, that my friend had his shears, with their points carefully tied together with a piece of washleather and twine, and hung round his neck by a knotted braid. A crook he had not—our northern shepherds have no need of them—but he carried a staff in his hand to steady himself from crag to crag, and the shears shone at his side.

'And how does a shepherd,' said the lady who was on her way to her first shepherds' meeting, 'know a sheep that has strayed from another pasturage or "heaf," if you say that these sheep wander for miles away, and there must be on Helvellyn many flocks?'

'Ay, that there are, there are thirteen or fourteen flocks on this side the range, let alone all the Matterdale side and on beyond the Raise. But "the shepherd kens his oan," as the saying is. Ay, ay, dar bon! but I have mothered seventy or eighty lambs at smitting time mysel'; for I remember well one time I was shepherding for Gasgarth, and his missus said to me, "Jem, mother that 'un," and I went reight intill middle o' t' flock and browt out t' mother on it, and so for eighty or mair without yance mekkin' a mistak'; it's just habit and eyes as does it; there's a different leuk about t' feaces of a lock of sheep as there is about t' feaces of men—boddies.'

'But,' interrupted the lady, 'you have to know not only your own flock's faces, but the faces of strangers, if you will return them to their rightful owners.'

'To be sure; but theer's shepherds' beuks, and we study them and ken aw the marks as ivver war made; it's shepherds' beuk as does that job for us. Eh my! but day's darkening in; it 'ull be a bad day for the meeting, I fear.' And as he spoke the great sea of cloud that had laid heavily along above the uppermost ridges sank down and, darkening the whole hillside to purple, cast a kind of silver lurid thunder-light upon the valley far below us. We entered the mist, and heard voices calling and dogs barking.

'There's a lad coming up to his first shepherds' meeting from Dale head. He'll be lost in this mist; we had better wait here. I told him to keep to the Ghyll till he reached the Brund; that's his dog, by his voice, I'll warrant him. West ho!' cried the shepherd; 'he'll ken who it is that's shouting when he hears my

dog's name—thar's only yan "West" upon Helvellyn—West ho!' Far down from the mist world beneath us came a shrill answering whistle, and by-and-by out of the mist, like giants, ran two dogs, to the sound of 'Git awa' back' from the young master below. Our collies immediately joined them; the shepherd-lad whistled, and away they went to give him escort towards us. 'It's very strange dogs seldom lose themselves in the mist,' said the yeoman. 'I remember hearing Edward Hawell say he was once mist-bound upon Calva, and he would not follow his dog when he told it to "Git away yam;" and consequence was, dog landed at yam (home), but Hawell landed at Caldbeck, six miles in another direction.

'Dogs go so much by scent, I suppose, and they can track back footmarks, and can so run back on a track, no matter how blinding the mist is; but a mist does nobody harm if you will look which way the wind blows when you enter it, and take the first runner you come upon for guide, for a watter-runner will always lead you to the bottom.'

Just then the dogs came up towards us, to see if we were standing where they had last seen us, and disappeared into the mist to bring their master on; and on he came, and with him the man who carried the lunch to the shepherds' meeting, and before him a ewe with a lamb at her side.

'Whose ewe is't?' 'It hes upper-hauved nar, far stuffed, and under-fauld bitted, but I cannot mak out smit, rains has ratherly weshed it.' And, saying this, he relapsed into silence, and we plodded on and upward through the blinding mist. The ewe was fairly tired out, but the shepherd gave it a knee from time to time, and with this assistance it managed to get along; but that 'upper-hauved nar, far stuffed, under-fauld bitted,' was a puzzler.

'You see, shepherd's beuk hes all sic-like marks in it. Every shepherd's flock hes some variety in ear-marking and in smitting. If we cut off the top of the ear, we say its ear is clipped or stuffed ("stoved," "stubbed"); if we slit it, we say it is tritted or ritted; if we take a piece out of it, we say it is bitted; and sometimes we take two or three bits out of the ear, and we call it key-bitted. Sometimes we take a piece out in shape of a spoon, and we call it spoon-shanked. Again, we cut one-half of a top of the ear clean away, and we call it under or upper halving. Sometimes we snip a bit out of the upper or under fold of the ear, and we say it is

under-folded or upper-folded. Again, we sometimes take a little piece out of the middle of the ear, and we say it has been ear-punched. Then in addition to these ear-marks, which are very durable, we have burning of marks upon horned sheep—horn-burn—and, in addition, we take raddle and tar, and smit or smite the sheep with peculiar marks on the fleece, sometimes with a bugle-horn, or triangle, or square, or streak, or pop; and, finally, most flocks have the letters of the original flock-master put upon them with black tar and grease—the latter process at shearing-time in summer, the former process at dipping or “sauving” time in the late autumn.

‘But,’ put in my companion, ‘what about the “Shepherd’s Book?”’

‘Why, it is just here where we are helped by knowledge of the book; for in this book there are drawn pictures of sheep belonging to every flock-master, and the ear-marks and smits and letters are carefully noted upon the picture; the description is given below each sheep’s portrait. And no shepherd on these west fells of Cumberland, or the east fells, and right away in Yorkshire and over the border, but can tell, if he knows his “Shepherd Book,” whose the sheep is that he comes across, on fell or at market.’

I did not know then, as I do know now, how recent an institution, comparatively speaking, this Shepherd’s Book, or Guide, was. Joseph Walker—peace to his ashes in the little churchyard of Martindale!—was the author and publisher of the first ‘Shepherd’s Guide’ in 1817. Long may it be ere his famous sheep-shearing song be forgotten; and, as long as stars shine for shepherd-lords and laddies, may we remember that the first great shepherds’ meeting took place at the sign of the ‘Star’ on Martindale Hause, at Joseph Walker’s invitation.

As for the western fells, William Mounsey, the last of the kings of Patterdale, and William Kirkpatrick, of Howtown, seem to have enlarged ‘Walker’s Sheep Book’ in 1819. In 1839 they published at Penrith an enlarged edition; in 1849 another guide of the west fells appeared. The east and south fells amalgamated; and in 1873 the ‘Shepherd’s Guide’ for the east and south fells appeared, with the sheep-marks of 1,566 flocks of Yorkshire, Northumberland, Durham, part of Cumberland, part of Westmoreland, and still the western fells maintain their own book of sheep-marks.

Joseph Walker would, if he could leave his rest in the quiet dale of St. Martin, be perhaps a little annoyed to find that on the Sunday his injunction, 'That all stray sheep shall be proclaimed at the church,' had been set aside; but he would be gladdened to know how his simple plan to make it easy for each man to have his own restored to him has succeeded, and how he, as father of the 'Shepherd's Guide,' is held in honour.

'Dogs ken the way,' said my friend, as we staggered on through the mist. 'Fauld is not far off, but I reckon that the shepherds will be very near starved to death waiting for us; it's well we carry the lunch.'

Then the cloud-wrack lifted, and we saw a long low wall; dogs leaped up on to the coping of it and barked; shepherds' heads appeared one by one above the grey stone barrier and gave us good-day. The shepherds' ponies near neighed at us, and we were soon sitting with the Helvellyn shepherds, true sons of the mist and the mountain, learning the various incidents of the day's 'hounding' of the fells for 'the gethering,' as it is called.

What a bit of old-world story it was, this getherin'! Here were sons of the Viking, with their dogs as clever and true as ever that good dog Vigi of King Olaf was, that we read of in the 'Heimskringla' and the Icelandic saga of Trygvesson.

Here were the very children of the North Sea rovers—Jacksons, Harrisons, Dixons, Wilsons, Wilkinsons, Donaldsons, Allinsons, Dawsons, Hawkriggs, Brownriggs, Salkelds, Hinds—high-seated on their misty, cloud-encircled hill, here in the gloom of the gods; and peace, not war, was their message; good-luck, not ill-luck, was their mutual feeling; they reddened no altars with blood, though the raddle-pot lay at their side, but they told stories in the cloudy and dark day of perilous ascents in the cold times of snow, and of wrestling with the wind, and of hardy adventure after the sheep that were lost; and, sadly enough, they spoke of a comrade who had gone some years ago from their mountain shepherds' meeting suddenly into the land that was very far off. We felt it was a land that was very nigh to us all, as one of the party told how the shepherd had tried to turn a 'woolled sheep' back into the fold, flung himself on it, got his hands tangled in the wool, and then how the sheep had leapt with a bound and dragged him so near to the crag's slope that he fell head foremost and was picked up a dying man.

'Theer was a man here as maade a bit of poetry about it a

lock o' years efter,' said an old shepherd as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe. 'Here, Jossy, thou can mind verses, and mun gev' it oot.' And Jossy put his head back, and, colouring a bit, gave us the simple verses that had chronicled the falling of the cloud that came down on that Stybarrow meeting on the day the comrade of the shepherds died at his post:—

Well met are the shepherds from Wythburn and Naddle,
From Matterdale, Patterdale far, far away;
Well met are the sheep who, in spite of the raddle,
And ear-bit and flank-smit have wandered astray.

Here's luck to the shepherd of misty Helvellyn,
And joy to the shepherd-lad trusty and brave;
And life to them all, for there's none can be telling
How soon each may rest in a fell-shepherd's grave.

For death is our guest at this Stybarrow meeting,
Our friend was flung o'er from the crag at our side;
We remember his laugh and the sun of his greeting,
We think of the cloud that came down when he died.

Oh, swift was the end of our comrade's life's story,
In care of his charge did he come by his fall;
For duty he died, and by duty found glory,
And follows on now to the Head Shepherd's call.

There was something very touching in the silence that fell upon the group of weather-worn men resting there with their backs to the wall, waiting for the late arrival of this or that 'shep.' with his contribution of strayed sheep from the fold. But the death of the shepherd led us to speak of that other death upon Helvellyn in 1805, when young Gough met his end on Striding Edge crags, and laid withering away to a skeleton for three months, with none but the birds of the air to hover over him, and the faithful terrier to keep both bird of the air and fox of the hillside from cruel work upon the body of his master.

'Eh, but dog was a fair skeleton hissel' when he was found, and like eneuf poor thing, for it hed hed nowt but a rabbit or two or a bit of carrion-sheep from one of the ghyll bottoms, you kna, whoal time,' said one. 'Dog was a laal yallow sort of a tarrier,' put in another. 'I've heard my father say that the poor thing had got so sceered by being in sic a lonesome spot that it wouldn't let anyone come nigh it, and they was forced to set hounds on to catch it. Dogs didn't hurt it, poor thing! Dar bon! but it's wonderful things is dogs; so faithful and true!

Yan they cawed Sir Walter Scott put t' dog in a poetry book, and Wudswuth wrote a bit on it an aw.'

I remembered the poem that began—

I climbed the dark brow of the mighty Helvellyn,

and thinking of the three months' vigil of that faithful little dog in that savage place by the Red Tarn, I repeated half aloud:—

'How nourish'd here through such long time
He knows who gave that love sublime,
And gave that strength of feeling, great
Above all human estimate.'

'Ah, dogs can feel a'most as much as a man,' muttered a shepherd. 'If I speak rough to Vic theer, dog's wasted for a whoal day, it seems to mourn sea.' Ay, indeed, from the day 1,000 years ago, when King Olaf fell fighting his long ship, and Einar went to the king's favourite dog and said: 'Vigi, we have lost our master,' and, as we read, 'then the dog hearing this, sprang to his feet and yelled aloud as if he had received a sting in his heart,' and refusing to take food 'was seen, as it were, to shed tears and moaned till he died,' even to this day, there is a chord of common human feeling between dog and man which the owners of the modern Vics experience to be as strong, as Einar and those who knew the good dog Vigi of old had found.

But the collie-dog, or dog for the coaly-faced mountain sheep—for this is the definition given by one of the latest writers upon the collie-dog, Mr. Rawdon Lee—has lost the fighting and tutelary or life-protecting instinct of old times. Men do not cry to their dogs as Olaf did of old in the Icelandic saga, 'Pin that man for me;' nor, like the shepherds in Virgil, do they value their dogs of the Molossian breed for their fierceness against wolves and robbers. And though still in Thibet and the Pyrenees the sheep-dog is the guardian against wild beast and rogues, it is clear that the collie-dog of our Cumberland hills, for all his jealousy of other collies, has been bred for peace and patience, swift legs and swifter wit.

A dog that shows signs of worrying is 'put down' at once. A dog that bites or snaps at sheep has a ring with a hook put in his nose, and he snaps at a woolled one at his peril, for the hook catches in the fleeces, and away goes the sheep and gives such a pull to the dog's nose as the dog will think of for many a day.

But there is a pride about these collies. They remember insults. Suddenly all our talk was stopped by a general running

together of the dogs, a kind of football bully among collies, and if one could have understood dog Billingsgate I fancy one would not have been edified.

'Oh, it's that dog of Ritson's,' said a shepherd. 'He got a sair pinch at this meeting last year, and I thowt he'd giv' it back to Watson's yan this time, and, by gocks! he hes an aw; seast tha Watson's dog goas upo' three! He'll not pinch him agaeen, I'll be bound.'

It certainly was most interesting to watch the way in which Ritson's dog, having satisfied his dignity by returning the last year's pinch, went off and lay down in quiet contemplative pride.

But what a singular-looking set of dogs they were! There were, as it seemed, two distinct breeds: the slape-haired and the rough-haired; and of the former there were again two distinct kinds, the long-coated, bushy-collared, bushy-tailed, bushy-faced creature that we are familiar with by Briton Riviere's beautiful picture of 'Rus in Urbe,' and another type of dog with ears almost of the prick, short-cut kind, and with a sort of lurcher look, of the queerest possible colour, brindled grey with white or wall-eyes, or simply black and tan, or white and tan with dark eyes—dogs with foxy faces, and evidently built for speed, not high from the ground either, but long-bodied and lithe. These last were from the famous Dalebottom breed; but it was clear that many farmers had their own strain and colour, and had, as I learned, kept up the strains for long generations.

My friend's yellow collies were in the sixth generation, and since many collies work twelve years, their strain dated back for seventy years.

As one looked at the heads of the dogs one felt that there was a look of the Esquimaux dog about them, but the brush of the Esquimaux dog was absent. One thing struck one at once, and this was their marvellous understanding of the minds of their masters.

'Dogs can dea all but talk, ya kna. Theer's yan o' Cartmel's theer, he's as auld-fashined a fellow as ivver was. At milking-time yan has nowt to dea but say naame of close, and dog 'ull be up and out o' door and away to t' field and he'll be gathering coos and bringing 'em up to t' yaat by time the lad is there to oppen it; and if yaat's nobbut oppen, he'll bring 'em reight oop road and intil byre. Ay, I've knawed a dog of Flemming's that could drive a whoal flock fra Keswick to Ambleside by hissel', and

stood at all the road ends and kep 'em reight and nivver neabody along of him.'

Thought I, Vigi, old fellow, famed in story, it is told how Olaf the king first was attached to you, because you were able at a word to single out from the mixed multitude of captured oxen all those that belonged to the poor man who was suppliant for his kine unto the king. I am not sure but that the Vigis of our modern day have not as much wisdom and claim to royal honour, for truly these collies upon Stybarrow Dodd do really seem to know the very words that fall in casual talk from their masters' lips!

The crack went on, and with the crack went round the loving cup in true Viking fashion. I must confess that there was an entire lack of bread and cheese, and perhaps more liquor than was needed to keep the pulses actively going; but, with a single exception, and he not a shepherd but a hired carrier, there was no excess visible, and it was observable that when the cup went round the shepherds often only just wetted their lips and passed it on. Presently the hat went round for the sixpence contributed to their mountain lunch. Then two shepherds were summoned to take charge of the wayward sheep that had been scattered on the hills, and drive them, one down the western the other down the eastern slope of Helvellyn, to the fell farmsteads. And then the careful drafting of the flock in the pen into their two companies was effected. Each sheep had its lug-mark questioned, its smit, its letter, its horn-burn looked to, and the double fold was then opened, and away, to the sound of three cheers for the shepherds—three cheers for the Queen—went through the mist and cloud upon the heights to the bright afternoon in the valleys the thirty or forty men and their thirty or forty dogs, and the mountain assembly was dissolved till next year, the first Monday after the 20th of July.

We followed our courteous yeoman friend, who took as much care of us as if we had been his own kin. The dogs knew that they were to take us straight for home, and down the slope unfalteringly we went after these clever little guides. They ran ahead, but always returned from the mist, and went ahead again, till the dark cloud-wrack in a moment seemed to fly above our heads, and with a great cry of surprise we looked into the sunlit happy depths of the distant valleys.

Down towards the meadows, full of haymakers, down to the

rippling river, down to the deep dark silver mere of Thorold the Dane, our Thirlmere, did we pass. And so by the old peat track and the sheep pool in the ghyll, till the farm by the 'Stony water' hard by the Castle Rock was reached. There, sitting in one of the poet Southey's own armchairs, in a cosy farm parlour, we partook with the hospitable yeoman and his good wife of the cheeriest of meals, and thought of the quiet patience and honour of a shepherd's life, of the power of the Cumberland hills to make trustful and generous, to educate and to refine, and deemed ourselves not a little privileged to have been admitted among the shepherd sons of Helvellyn, to that mist-wreathed mountain assembly.

THE LOSS OF THE 'EMIR.'

CHAPTER I.

FORTUNATELY, Nature had endowed Murad Tcherkess with an exceptional share of that stolid patience which is the common heritage and often the only virtue of the Oriental. More than six months ago he had arrived in Stamboul with his band of Circassian refugees, received a promise of an immediate grant of land in Syria, and begun to attend day by day in the vestibule of the Ministry of the Interior, in expectation that the pledge would be ratified. But even if His Majesty had been disposed to hasten the tardy wheels of formality, His Majesty's subordinates had a very real interest in clogging the same: for had not the Circassians in their possession a considerable sum of money, realised on the sale of their horses and household effects before leaving Batoum; and were they not asking a very particular favour of the Padisha? The interpreters, clerks, and even higher officials in Constantinople had not been paid in full since heaven knew when, and yet, like other men, they had need to live. So it was not to be marvelled at that, with here a bribe and there a back-sheesh, poor Murad and his followers found their small store of capital rapidly approaching the vanishing point, and the chance of being able to settle on the promised allotment with anything more than their clothes and arms becoming daily more remote. They could have held their own well enough had it been a matter of blows, or even of ordinary lying; but against this impenetrable wall of corrupt officialism, so unlike in its complexity anything that they had combated in their own mountains, the Circassians fretted in vain: and as hope was deferred from day to day, the refugees, lounging in the dirty coffee-shops of Stamboul, or squatting about the Government offices and courtyards of mosques, began to mutter that they had been lured by false promises, and when no longer able to bribe, would be left to starve in the bazaars. The Turks gave them a wide berth, for they hate and fear the active acute Circassian, as he in turn despises and distrusts those whom, in the day of adversity, he must acknowledge as his masters; and as the groups of tall, fair men became daily

more noisy, and knives were displayed and pistols examined, it is possible that advice reached headquarters that it would be well to get the Tcherkess out of the city before they became desperate men.

So it came about that one day, when Murad had waited with his faithful henchmen an hour or two in the whitewashed corridor of the Ministry, sullenly revolving the expediency of taking to the hills, he was startled from his reverie by the unexpected sound of his own name, bellowed down the crowded passage by slipshod orderlies. Rising with a fitting absence of haste, and followed by the two young men whose attendance his position as tribal chieftain demanded, he passed, with measured step and head erect, between the lines of filthy supplicants, gathered from the four winds of heaven, and waiting, like himself, day by day upon the favour of the Minister. A strange assemblage, the scourings of two continents: Christian traders, Greek or Armenian, capped with the fez, and clad in holland clothes, which, like the greasy linen protruding from the sleeves, looked as if they did equal duty night and day; in contrast to these, smart Montenegrins and Albanians, in all the bravery of crimson cloth, braided gaiters, and silver-mounted arms; Tartar and Georgian waggons from Central Asia; high-capped Persians, with sleek hair and refined features; little Zeibecs, and black-browed, black-haired Kurds. But the tall Circassian was a king among these men—morally and physically their superior, both in virtue of race-characteristics and of education. For he was no barbarian: he had served as an officer of irregulars under the Russian flag, and seen something of men and cities; and to manners which would hardly have disgraced a drawing-room, he added an energy and an acuteness which were much in excess of those possessed by the miserable little Turk to whose presence, after various delays, he was introduced, and to whom he salaamed low, yet without that servile dwelling on the various motions of the salute whereby a member of any other nation, similarly placed and similarly expectant, would certainly have abased himself.

The interview was only prolonged by the customary circumlocutions, and Murad was soon informed that His Imperial Majesty (whom Allah bless!) had assigned to him and his people a tract of land in the vilayet of Aleppo, formerly the holding of certain Arabs, who had been dispossessed for turbulence and non-payment of taxes. He was further told that a steamer was due to depart

in five days' time for Iskenderûn, by which he might rid Stamboul of his presence.

Back down the corridor and out into the streets strode Murad, with a brisker step and a lighter heart than had been his for many a long day past; like all children of the mountains, he loathed the close air and the slipshod civilisation of the great city, and had felt very really and very deeply the loss of his home and the severance of the ties which bound him to the Caucasian village where his people had lived for many generations. The Circassian is essentially feudal; to him his tribe and its territory are all in all, a little world which takes no account of the greater: and to be expelled by men of alien race and alien creed—to be expelled, moreover, for no other fault than that he was more powerful than his neighbours—had affected Murad more bitterly than his outward demeanour had revealed. Upon this had supervened the weary detention among new masters, whom his energetic nature heartily despised; and any means of escape had appeared equally grateful.

So it was with something of reinstated dignity that he marched down the bazaars, with his henchmen at his heels, and turned into a squalid khan in the slimiest quarter of Stamboul. Leaving his followers to communicate the blessed news to a little crowd of long-coated, high-capped men, who had risen at their chief's entrance, he strode up the ladder to the crazy balcony, and, stopping before the closed door of a room, shouted two or three words in his own language. A response came from within, and he passed in to a group of unveiled females, one of whom, evidently his daughter, rose to meet him, surprised by the unwonted animation of his manner.

Magnificent examples of their magnificent race were these two standing face to face in the filthy *oda*. The father was well over six feet in height, flat-backed and broad-chested, with the regular features, deep grey eyes, brown hair and slightly curling beard, which distinguish his kind from the squat Tartars and black-haired Persians. The daughter was of singular beauty even among her own people: five inches less than her father, his splendid proportions had been preserved but contracted in hers; her features, regular as a Greek's, were not blanched like those of the hot-house flower which blooms in Constantinople harems, but delicately bronzed by unveiled exposure to her native sun; while her eyes, more blue than her father's, were innocent of henna. Wavy

masses of brown hair escaped from the coiled strands, and framed the face which looked up at Murad's while her hands took his.

'Why comes my father so early from the Konak to-day?' she asked. 'It is only the fourth hour.'

'What would my sweet Pembé desire most that Allah should give her this day?' he interrupted, caressing the soft hair with his great hand; 'what more than sweetmeats or other pleasant things?'

The girl looked up eagerly.

'If Allah would grant that we might return!'— She stopped, and added, sadly: 'But that will never be. Next to that I would be released from this prison of walls, where I see no mountains or bright fields, and where the men's hearts are black.'

She paused, and looked into his eyes. For a moment he did not speak, enjoying her expectancy; then, drawing her closer to him, said:

'My daughter, it is even so! This very morning has the Padisha (whom Allah, the compassionating, bless!) granted us land, where we may live in peace among our own people;' and, calling for coffee, he sat down on the divan, and told the delighted women of the situation and circumstances of their home that was to be. Presently he set them about making preparations for the departure, and rose to rejoin his henchmen below, staying a moment to caress his daughter.

'And so thou art glad to leave this wonderful city, my little bird?' he said.

'Glad as the prisoner to be free,' she replied; 'for these Turks are bad men, and such as would do evil things. Shall I tell my lord? Yesterday, towards sunset, when I and Dudu were upon the bridge, a slave spoke to us, and making pretence that thou hadst sent him, led us a little way to the stairs, where was a boat with men; and they seized us by the arms, and would have dragged us into the boat, but we cried aloud and struggled, and for fear of the zaptiehs they let us go, and rowed away. But we ran back here, and were ashamed to tell it to you till now.'

Murad's eyes grew hard, and a curse rose to his lips; but he checked it, and said:

'Praise be to Allah, we shall have no more of this. Thou must not quit the khan, my pretty one, and in five days thou shalt see no more of these men.'

He opened the door, and as he stepped out on to the balcony a black slave, who had been talking with the delighted Circassians below, rose, stretched himself, and slouched down the street in the direction of the Galata bridge.

CHAPTER II.

SEVEN days later the steamship 'Emir' was creaking and groaning through the lumpy seas outside the Dardanelles at the modest rate of about five knots an hour; never did a crankier old tub carry a cargo of Baku petroleum and a full complement of deck-passengers; and only from a Levantine port would she have been allowed to put to sea at all. The lettering on her wheel, as well as her general build, showed that she had been turned out many years before on the Clyde; but, whoever her first owners may have been, she had long plied as a cargo-boat between Constantinople, the Black Sea, and the Anatolian ports, gradually losing any vestige of paint she ever possessed, and acquiring in its stead a general aspect of mottled shabbiness and incalculable stores of filth and vermin. Whether her funnel had originally been black or white, or both or neither, it was now past human power to determine; and not a rope or a chain in the ship looked capable of sustaining the slightest strain. The few men who formed her crew were Greeks, with the single exception of a negro cook of villainous aspect. The officers were Mussulmans, and the captain a tall, determined ruffian, heavily-moustached and low-browed, with shifty eyes and full, sensuous mouth, was, to judge from his dress and appearance, of a better class than might have been expected on board the 'Emir.'

The passengers were Murad Tcherkess and his band, on their way, under contract, to the port of Iskenderûn, where the 'Emir' was to unload her cargo of petroleum. A few of the Circassians were leaning over the ship's bulwarks, others were stretched on the deck and hatches asleep or sea-sick; but the majority squatted together in little groups, smoking, playing cards, eating, or chattering, while the children tumbled about on quilts spread out amidships. On the port side of the deck-house a space was reserved for the women, and a ragged awning was stretched to the ship's side. The passage through the Sea of Marmora had been

enlivened by a squall, from whose effects the outer sea was still heaving, and poor Pembé and her companions had scarcely held up their heads since embarking at ten o'clock the evening before, and they lay on their quilts feeling that life was but a bubble at best. But as the sun sank lower, the sea heaved ever less high, and the old 'Emir' (which would have rolled somewhat on the veriest duckpond) began to swing less outrageously; so it chanced that Pembé at last opened her eyes, looked dreamily up to the ragged awning above, and suddenly became aware of a man standing on the quarter-deck, and looking down through the rents of the canvas. With a quick gesture she drew her yashmak over her mouth; another indignant look, and, springing up, she clutched the prostrate Dudu.

'Do you see him?' she whispered, quickly—'the man who was in the boat that evening at the bridge: what is he doing here? why does he look at us? Look! there he is,' she added, pointing to a figure now beating a retreat forward; 'do you recognise him?'

Dudu looked a moment, and then assented: it was the captain.

Aroused by Pembé's exclamation, other women huddled round and asked what ailed her; but the girl, half ashamed of her fright and of its cause, evaded their questions and waited till the evening meal should be over to tell her father. The herculean Circassian made little of the matter. 'True,' said he, 'the devil would dearly love to possess himself of thee; but what can he and his score of infidels do against a hundred men who would die for thee? I knew that black devil of a cook at once for the man who hung about the khan in Stamboul; and doubtless he was set to learn our intentions, while this swine arranged with these thieving scribes that he should convey us, in the hope that he might find some way to approach thee. But fear not; he knew not the Tcherkess, and no harm can touch thee before we reach Isken-derûn; and then'—he touched the silver-chased hilt of his long knife—'we may teach him, ere we depart, not to try again with our women what he has tried to do to thee.' He rose and looked over the ship's side; the swelling surface, no longer broken or variegated with foamy patches, heaved gently and reflected the moonlight from its oily surface. The 'Emir' was passing between Tenedos and the mainland of the Troad, and, as Murad's eyes looked over the low ground to the distant peaks

of Ida, capped with white, moonlit mists, he heaved a sigh, not for the memories of that historic coast, but for the hoary crags and deep green valleys that he had left in his beloved Caucasus. A soft hand was laid on his, and Pembé, following the direction of his eyes, divined his thoughts. 'Courage!' she whispered; 'we shall find other hills as fair, other pastures like those we have left. A little more, and we shall cease to remember what has been.' But Murad seemed only half comforted, and, passing his hand lovingly over her hair, bade her good night, and assigned places near the women's quarter to his most faithful henchmen, with whom he purposed to watch, turn by turn, through the hot summer night.

From the bridge Yacoub Bey, the captain, watched these preparations, as he had watched the previous conference. A renegade Greek of Samos, he combined the energy and falseness of his race with the sensuousness and cruelty of the religion of his adoption. From the first moment that he had set eyes on the beautiful Circassian girl in the streets of Stamboul, he had determined to possess her; but the attempt made a fortnight later had failed, as we have seen, and the dreaded Tcherkess were guardians too vigilant for the attempt at *enlèvement* to be repeated. It was, therefore, as Murad has guessed, in the vague hope of finding some way to Pembé that he had offered to convey the troublesome Tcherkess to Iskenderûn in the cranky tub which he owned, and which had been loading for that port for the last month in the Golden Horn. Many things might happen between the Dardanelles and the first sight of the peaks of Amanus, and no one would ask questions about a body of Circassian refugees. Was not the 'Emir,' too, insured in Greek offices fully up to her rather problematical value? So Yacoub stood on the bridge, looking back at the lights of Tenedos, or ahead to the mist-wreaths upon the Lesbian hills, and revolving many shifts, with a cold-blooded candour which permitted no altruistic considerations to prejudice the probability of success.

But the night passed, and the next day brought no incident, save an occasional breakdown of the crazy engines or a wrangle over a game of cards. The 'Emir' ploughed her laborious course past islands and islets lifting out of the blue sea their steep shores covered with scrub or smiling vineyards, while here and there white villages nestled far up in the curves of the mountain walls. At Scio, rent and crumbling yet from the great

earthquake, the 'Emir' stopped to take in water and load more cargo; but no passengers came on board, and towards evening the screw was once more induced to revolve, and the steamer panted out of the road and headed for the western point of Samos. Nothing happened either that night or next day, nor again for a night and day after leaving Rhodes, to confirm the suspicions of Pembé and her father, and it became evident to them that the captain had been deterred by the strict watch maintained, and that nothing was to be apprehended until they should reach Iskenderûn; thereafter Murad had his own views as to a method of precluding all danger when the 'Emir' had been a few hours in port. Nay, Yacoub seemed anxious to conciliate the suspicious Tcherkess, made no difficulties as to their accommodation, had the cafedji beaten for extortion, and, when a little affair of knives occurred between the cook and a Circassian boy who persisted in singing when the negro wished to slumber, he even put that sable functionary in irons and promised to bring him before the Cadi at Iskenderûn. So the day drew to a close, and, as the sun was sinking behind the Taurus and the 'Emir' left Cape Annamur astern, the captain descended from the bridge and, sending for a case-bottle of mastica, invited Murad and his henchmen to drink a bout with him. The good Moslem seldom resists the attraction of that insidious fluid—supposed, by a pleasing fiction, to be excluded from the Prophet's prohibition—and presently the little glasses were filled and refilled, Yacoub mixing his spirit with water, after the fashion of Smyrna, the Tcherkess drinking it neat. The latter had been drinking more or less all day at their own expense, and soon passed from noisiness to quarrelling, and from quarrelling to drowsiness, until one after another coiled himself up and fell asleep in his appointed station, or wherever the drowsy god attacked him. It was a hot, heavy night, such as Levantines know too well when the scirocco blows in July; the very moonbeams seemed to diffuse a sickly warmth, and the orb herself to tremble in the haze. Placid as oil stretched the sea towards the distant peaks of Karamania, and no sound broke the dense stillness except the panting of the engines and the wash of the screw. Midnight was past, but every now and again a barefooted sailor passed along the gangway from bridge to quarterdeck, carrying in his arms a bundle which might have been canvas or tackle, but which was deposited carefully in one or other of the two boats

swinging aft on the davits. Presently more figures crept up, and the boats were lowered noiselessly and made fast, while dark figures swarmed down to man the thwarts. One loosed her mooring-rope and passed rapidly away astern; the other still drifted along under the port side with three men in her, while two others stepped cautiously over the prostrate figures on the deck; they stopped, stooped down, and, quick as light, thrust something into the mouth of a sleeping woman, and, seizing her, literally dropped her over the ship's side into the boatmen's arms below, her two captors swarming down into the boat.

But, slight as the noise was, it had aroused the nearest women, and, dazed and hardly conscious of what had occurred, they started to their feet.

An instant later, their cry of alarm awakened Murad and a score of tall figures, who rushed to the side where the frightened women stood, only to see the second boat dropping fast astern on the moonlit waters. Twenty pistol shots rang out on the night air, but their effect could not be discerned, and the steamer's way soon carried the kidnappers out of sight. Frantic with impotent fury, Murad and his henchmen rushed forward to the bridge, the engine-room, the poop—all were deserted. Nowhere was the captain to be seen, nowhere a single officer or sailor: without engineer or steersman, the 'Emir' was steaming steadily ahead, at the mercy of the currents, without one single man on board who knew how to manage her!

Murad came back from his search with white face and set teeth, unable even to utter the torrent of imprecation which most Moslems would have vented for a lesser evil. The boats were all gone; the 'Emir' steamed whither she would, and no one knew even how to stop her engines. He felt so utterly powerless, so hopeless of resisting or averting fate, that he had hardly begun to think of avenging Pembé's loss on those who had been set to guard her, when a new and terrible danger revealed itself. Through the cracks of the hatches of the forehold curled up, faster and thicker, wreaths of smoke, and from the crowd of men and women huddled on the deck rose one shout of 'Fire!' Murad and his men rushed to the hatches and, in their ignorance, tore them up; but the volume of flame and smoke which escaped showed that the fire had too strong a hold for human efforts to extinguish it. This, then, was Yacoub's plan! For this the scoundrel had insured his crazy tub.

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From the bridge Yacoub Bey, the captain, watched these preparations, as he had watched the previous conference. A renegade Greek of Samos, he combined the energy and falseness of his race with the sensuousness and cruelty of the religion of his adoption. From the first moment that he had set eyes on the beautiful Circassian girl in the streets of Stamboul, he had determined to possess her; but the attempt made a fortnight later had failed, as we have seen, and the dreaded Tcherkess were guardians too vigilant for the attempt at *enlèvement* to be repeated. It was, therefore, as Murad has guessed, in the vague hope of finding some way to Pembé that he had offered to convey the troublesome Tcherkess to Iskenderûn in the cranky tub which he owned, and which had been loading for that port for the last month in the Golden Horn. Many things might happen between the Dardanelles and the first sight of the peaks of Amanus, and no one would ask questions about a body of Circassian refugees. Was not the 'Emir,' too, insured in Greek offices fully up to her rather problematical value? So Yacoub stood on the bridge, looking back at the lights of Tenedos, or ahead to the mist-wreaths upon the Lesbian hills, and revolving many shifts, with a cold-blooded candour which permitted no altruistic considerations to prejudice the probability of success.

But the night passed, and the next day brought no incident, save an occasional breakdown of the crazy engines or a wrangle over a game of cards. The 'Emir' ploughed her laborious course past islands and islets lifting out of the blue sea their steep shores covered with scrub or smiling vineyards, while here and there white villages nestled far up in the curves of the mountain walls. At Scio, rent and crumbling yet from the great

earthquake, the 'Emir' stopped to take in water and load more cargo; but no passengers came on board, and towards evening the screw was once more induced to revolve, and the steamer panted out of the road and headed for the western point of Samos. Nothing happened either that night or next day, nor again for a night and day after leaving Rhodes, to confirm the suspicions of Pembé and her father, and it became evident to them that the captain had been deterred by the strict watch maintained, and that nothing was to be apprehended until they should reach Iskenderûn; thereafter Murad had his own views as to a method of precluding all danger when the 'Emir' had been a few hours in port. Nay, Yacoub seemed anxious to conciliate the suspicious Tcherkess, made no difficulties as to their accommodation, had the cafedji beaten for extortion, and, when a little affair of knives occurred between the cook and a Circassian boy who persisted in singing when the negro wished to slumber, he even put that sable functionary in irons and promised to bring him before the Cadi at Iskenderûn. So the day drew to a close, and, as the sun was sinking behind the Taurus and the 'Emir' left Cape Annamur astern, the captain descended from the bridge and, sending for a case-bottle of mastica, invited Murad and his henchmen to drink a bout with him. The good Moslem seldom resists the attraction of that insidious fluid—supposed, by a pleasing fiction, to be excluded from the Prophet's prohibition—and presently the little glasses were filled and re-filled, Yacoub mixing his spirit with water, after the fashion of Smyrna, the Tcherkess drinking it neat. The latter had been drinking more or less all day at their own expense, and soon passed from noisiness to quarrelling, and from quarrelling to drowsiness, until one after another coiled himself up and fell asleep in his appointed station, or wherever the drowsy god attacked him. It was a hot, heavy night, such as Levantines know too well when the scirocco blows in July; the very moonbeams seemed to diffuse a sickly warmth, and the orb herself to tremble in the haze. Placid as oil stretched the sea towards the distant peaks of Karamania, and no sound broke the dense stillness except the panting of the engines and the wash of the screw. Midnight was past, but every now and again a barefooted sailor passed along the gangway from bridge to quarterdeck, carrying in his arms a bundle which might have been canvas or tackle, but which was deposited carefully in one or other of the two boats

swinging aft on the davits. Presently more figures crept up, and the boats were lowered noiselessly and made fast, while dark figures swarmed down to man the thwarts. One loosed her mooring-rope and passed rapidly away astern; the other still drifted along under the port side with three men in her, while two others stepped cautiously over the prostrate figures on the deck; they stopped, stooped down, and, quick as light, thrust something into the mouth of a sleeping woman, and, seizing her, literally dropped her over the ship's side into the boatmen's arms below, her two captors swarming down into the boat.

But, slight as the noise was, it had aroused the nearest women, and, dazed and hardly conscious of what had occurred, they started to their feet.

An instant later, their cry of alarm awakened Murad and a score of tall figures, who rushed to the side where the frightened women stood, only to see the second boat dropping fast astern on the moonlit waters. Twenty pistol shots rang out on the night air, but their effect could not be discerned, and the steamer's way soon carried the kidnappers out of sight. Frantic with impotent fury, Murad and his henchmen rushed forward to the bridge, the engine-room, the poop—all were deserted. Nowhere was the captain to be seen, nowhere a single officer or sailor: without engineer or steersman, the 'Emir' was steaming steadily ahead, at the mercy of the currents, without one single man on board who knew how to manage her!

Murad came back from his search with white face and set teeth, unable even to utter the torrent of imprecation which most Moslems would have vented for a lesser evil. The boats were all gone; the 'Emir' steamed whither she would, and no one knew even how to stop her engines. He felt so utterly powerless, so hopeless of resisting or averting fate, that he had hardly begun to think of avenging Pembé's loss on those who had been set to guard her, when a new and terrible danger revealed itself. Through the cracks of the hatches of the forehold curled up, faster and thicker, wreaths of smoke, and from the crowd of men and women huddled on the deck rose one shout of 'Fire!' Murad and his men rushed to the hatches and, in their ignorance, tore them up; but the volume of flame and smoke which escaped showed that the fire had too strong a hold for human efforts to extinguish it. This, then, was Yacoub's plan! For this the scoundrel had insured his crazy tub.

Aft rushed the terrified throng, pursued by the smoke and sparks, while the flames leapt out of the seething furnace of the hold and lapped at everything within reach. Presently the partition is burnt through, and the fire rushes into the engine-room. The main hold must soon be reached, and its inflammable contents will blaze like one beacon to heaven. In despair, women flung their children into the sea, and sprang in themselves. Some seized a cask or a spar and jumped overboard in the vague hope of reaching the dark coast which showed scarcely a mile ahead. Others, maddened by terror, rushed back within the reach of the flames. The engines had now become red-hot and had stopped, and the flaming wreck was drifting shorewards with the current, carrying still a few living creatures crouching behind the deck-house, but already scorched with the awful heat. But now the flames are in the main hold. For a moment, the casing of the petroleum resists them; then, as box after box is burned through, the column of flame rises higher and higher, and the last of the passengers, hastily seizing anything which comes to hand, fling themselves over the stern—some to sink, some, like Murad and one or two more, to swim or cling, half insensible, to their spars or staves. Hissing in the water fall the fragments of the ship, now outlined in fire and sending up a dense, spreading column of black oil-smoke, lighted below as from a furnace.

Still clinging to his spar, and still alive, Murad was washed up by the current in a little bay near the north-west point of Cyprus. The sun was already high when he was aroused from his stupor, and found himself the centre of a group of five or six Cypriote goatherds, who had (perhaps luckily) confined their attempts at restoring animation to the simple process of sitting round the prostrate man. Murad raised himself on his hands with that dull feeling of bewilderment and oblivion which succeeds unconsciousness, looked dizzily round on the leathery visages of the Cypriotes whispering together, and on the scrub-covered cliffs and burnished sea. One by one the events of the night reformed themselves in his brain—the abduction of his daughter, the fire, the leap into the reddened sea; and as the divergent incidents once more converged to form a vivid memory, he started from his lethargy with an oath, and began to question in Turkish the stolid goatherds, who still regarded him with patient curiosity. What had they seen? Where was the ship? How had he come

to shore? Had anyone else been saved? The peasants replied (as is the Cypriote's wont with a stranger) by telling the story to each other, and alluding to their interlocutor in the third person, as if he were a hundred miles away; but Murad soon gathered from the indirect narration that the flaming ship had attracted their notice as they lay out on the hills: that they had called to each other, and made their way down to the shore, and, in searching in the different coves for wreckage, had chanced on himself lying senseless on the sand. Of the ship they had seen no more, and she had probably filled and foundered. But, asked Murad again, had no boat, no other man or woman been seen? 'Aye,' said one, addressing his neighbour, 'you and I saw a little boat come into Exarchos Bay, and there seemed to be many men and a woman in it; but as we watched, it struck something, and there was a great shout, and the sea came over, and we saw no more of it; only two men seemed to get clear, and they swam, and we helped them to shore; but the rest remained in the sea.' 'What faces had these men?' interrupted Murad. 'One was a giaour, but the other was a Mussulman, though his face was also the face of a giaour: he seemed to be lord over the first, and an effendi; perhaps he was the capitano.' A few more details as to the appearance of the latter Murad succeeded in extorting with as much difficulty as the Cadi himself might have experienced: then there was a pause.

Presently, as one who speaks in sleep, he continued his interrogation of the goatherds: What became of the man? He seemed to be an effendi, said they, and therefore they had led him to the summer huts about the threshing-floors a mile or two eastward, and left him with one Hadji Panagi, while they returned to the shore. Where lay the path to the house? asked Murad. Round the bluff, said the youngest goatherd; but the effendi had agreed with the Hadji for mules, and he had heard him say that as soon as midday was well past he must set out for Rizokarpaso, the chief village of the district, and the Hadji would go with him to receive the money for the mule and show the path. The Tcherkess might meet him on the way, for the effendi must pass again along the foot of the hills only a quarter of a mile from the shore, and now it was already one hour after midday.

Murad stretched out his hand for a goatherd's water-bottle, and drank long and deep; then, rising without a word, strode out of the circle and westward along the beach. The Cypriotes

watched him with as much curiosity as they could muster, but did not attempt to follow: he was only a Tcherkess, and had nothing on him of value, and was best left alone; so, slinging or their wallets again, they lounged listlessly in different direction to rejoin their sleeping goats.

Through the deep sand walked, or almost ran, Murad, until he reached the western limit of the little cove; then, espying a gully leading into the cliff, struck up it to the rocky plain, thickset with impenetrable evergreens and flowering thorns from the beach to the hills. Through this stunted forest he forced his laborious way, now tripping over fallen firs, now torn by far-reaching thorns, until, close under the hills, he emerged upon the only track which leads down this wild coast. He paused a moment, and scrutinised the sand which here and there covered the path, seeming to look for traces of recent travellers; but there were none, and he hurried along westwards, stopping only wherever rocks overhung the track, or it descended a precipitous gully. At such points he would examine the neighbourhood, but always hurried on again, to stop once more after a few hundred yards. One spot at last seemed to arrest his attention: a torrent, descending from the central ridge, had carved for itself a tortuous ravine through the grey limestone rock; from the perpendicular walls jutted here and there a crag, and nothing but a few clinging bushes relieved the blistered nakedness of the gorge. Over shingle that it had brought down itself, and through boulders rolled into its bed from above, flowed a stream—no longer with the impetuous volume of winter, but trickling painfully, here caught and pinioned by stones which it would have dashed aside six months ago, there gurgling down a rocky step. Down the eastern cliff the path sloped obliquely, and Murad followed it to the torrent bed, and stooped to drink at one of the many pools; but the water was brackish, and heated by the July sun, and the Circassian rose unrefreshed to continue his way up the western cliff. The path was a mere track cut out of the side, and banked up here and there with boulders where the winter runlets fell across it, and, itself a water-course in winter, it was seamed and broken to an extent which would have rendered it impracticable to any beast of burden but a mule. Just before reaching the brow it turned sharply to the left round a low crag, and so debouched on the plateau again.

Once on the top Murad paused for a moment to look back

across the gorge and along the white path, whose course among the stunted firs and thorns could be seen for nearly a mile beyond, and then, creeping into the bushes to the north, followed for a few feet the edge of the cliff until he was some eight or ten feet above the path. From a traveller, either descending or ascending the sides of the ravine, he was wholly screened by the dense undergrowth, but could himself peer through the brake and see the path by which he had come. The spot seemed to please him, and stealthily he stretched himself out on the rock, and, resting his chin on his folded arms, looked fixedly eastwards.

It was hardly the third hour after midday, and the world seemed spent and dying; the light breeze, growing ever lighter with the declining sun, wafted no cooling airs to Murad's face, but rather a scorching breath, charged with the heat of the blistered rocks over which it had passed; and even the glittering sea gave no rest to the wearied eye, but seemed to burn no less than the great naked masses of Taurus on the opposite coast, seen above a tremulous mirage-haze. No human habitation, no grazing flocks, dispelled the illusion that the world was lying in a trance; the very lizards straddling on the rocks lay motionless, and the ceaseless shrilling of the cicadas and the hum of myriad insects alone revealed that anything was yet alive. Murad, too, lay perfectly still, gazing eastwards, eyes and ears intent, while the sun sank and the shadows lengthened: tinkling bells far off began to tell of herds driving their lazy goats down towards the folds; higher up the ravine Murad could see a flock scrambling down the gullies to the stream; birds flitted from bush to bush, and a great shadow passed over the ravine as a vulture swept on his way eastwards, not a feather moving in his outspread wings. Murad looked up at him for an instant, and then resumed his watch.

Five minutes passed, and suddenly the Circassian's gaze became more intent, and he half turned his head as though the better to catch some sound: was it real or fancied? Murad hardly knew. There it was again! a sharp clink, as of hoofs striking the rock. The suspense was long; but at last, round a turn of the path, nearly half a mile away, came three mounted figures riding westwards at the best pace of their mules. On they came towards the edge of the opposite cliff, the leader a peasant mounted on a donkey, the other two riding mules: and as they began to descend the long slope, it was at last apparent that the second

man was Yacoub Bey, the captain, and behind him rode one of his Greek sailors. Murad drew a deep breath of satisfaction, and, flattening himself yet more on the rock, followed every movement of the party. Slowly and painfully the cautious animals bore their riders, and, at the stream, the party paused for a moment ; but after a brief colloquy began the ascent. The mules stumbled perilously on the jagged track, hindered rather than helped by the cries and blows of their impatient riders ; while the little donkey, surer-footed than they, gradually placed a long interval between himself and his followers. Peering over the cliff-top, the Circassian, breathing shorter and shorter, seemed as though he would impress his finger-nails into the adamantine rock on which he lay, and, as the leader passed unregarding below him, drew up his knees and crouched under the bushy screen. A few moments more, and the second rider reaches the point where the path bends just below the ambushed man : carefully the mule sidles round the curve ; now her head is straight again, and Yacoub drives his heels against her flanks to urge her up the last ascent. A heavy breath, as of some wild animal, a clattering shower of earth and pebbles, and something hurls itself from the cliff-top on to the rider, and, bearing him instantly off the mule by irresistible impetus, falls with him headlong down the precipice, turning over and over in the descent. At the crash and Yacoub's terrified yell, the peasant, already on the cliff-top, turns, springs from his donkey, and rushes down the path towards the Greek sailor sitting transfixed on his mule. But the captain and his assailant have gone down by a far straighter way, where the bravest cragsman in the world would not have followed : plunging from boulder to boulder, now crashing through a clump of bushes, now cannoning with horrid concussion on a jutting crag, the pair whirl down closely locked, a medley of frantic limbs dimly seen through a cloud of dust and a hail of falling stones ! The pursuers could discern, when the rolling pair stopped at last on the brink of the stream, that neither man was yet dead ; for the captain was stabbing with one hand at the Circassian above him, while with the other he struggled frantically to loose the death-grip from his throat. Bathed in each other's blood, heeding not the broken bones and jagged gashes which both had suffered in the fall, the pair heaved and strove ; the herculean Circassian slowly but surely pressing out of Yacoub's throat the little life which his fractured skull had left him. But the pur-

suers are upon them at last, and the Greek drives his long knife into Murad's side, who rolls in his death-agony over and over on the shingle, tearing it up in handfuls. Scooping up a little brackish water, the peasant dashes it in Yacoub's blood-spattered face; but the closed eyes do not open, and, thrusting his hand under the vest, the Cypriote can feel no heart-beat. The game is over, and the captain will never draw a piastre of insurance-money for the ill-fated 'Emir'!

The peasant rose to his feet as the Greek sailor came up, wiping from his knife the blood of Murad; laconically he ejaculated, 'Dead,' and the pair stood for a minute looking from opposite sides down on the disfigured corpse. An idea seemed to strike both simultaneously: looking in each other's eyes, they stooped down again without a word, and rifled the dead—first the captain and then the Circassian.

The result was not satisfactory, to judge from muttered reflections upon the female ancestry of both ejaculated by the sailor; and, with a parting kick, the latter would have left the two corpses to the birds of prey. But, with the fear of the *zaptiehs* before his eyes, the Cypriote persuaded him to drag one body, while he himself followed with the other, towards a dry well a hundred yards down the gorge; while, baulked of their prey, four vultures hovered above the cliff, and swept over and over the scene of the struggle—the only beings on earth who would give another thought to the dead.

ON THE ROAD.

The fields are all sweet with hay,
 The brakes are all blithe with song,
 On the hedges rose-garlands sway,
 Convolvulus-clusters throng,
 As shoeless, and tattered, and grimy, and grey,
 He shuffles along.

A skylark sings high above,
 A thrush from yon hanging bough,
 Far away in the wood a dove;
 But he passes with scowling brow.
 Their melodies once he was wont to love;
 He hates them now.

Hates all; save the sheltering night,
 When under a bank he creeps,
 And Squalor is out of sight,
 And Hunger its distance keeps,
 And unmocked by the birds and the meadows bright,
 His misery sleeps.

FARMHOUSE NOTES.

May 4th.—Silence in the farm. Night, that good herdsman who brings all creatures home, has brought all home to the farm, and all are sleeping but me. This is my sitting-room, true farmhouse sitting-room of one step down, of samplers framed on the wall each side of a discoloured picture in a worm-eaten black frame, of sulphur matches, and not a bell in the house. Upstairs my bedroom looks on the farmyard and two weary, bearded horses fetlock deep in straw. Later, when the placid moon throws a triangular patch on a white bust of General Booth between two blue vases, I see a lantern flitting yellowly among the straw, and hear Mr. Frank call to something to come up out of it. And now below, not a sound but the table creaking and the fire that falls lower, like a tired old man.

Never mind ; better than the old familiar *brouhaha* of Piccadilly, and all the slipshod picture-theatre jargon, and the *wow-wow*, of 'At homes' and dances. I will go to bed early for a bit and make my mind clean and sweet, like a North of Ireland farm with whitewash. Heaven knows it needs it after a winter in London. Not a sound, and a text staring at me with uneven gold letters, 'Fear not, for I am with thee!' And to think that this time last night I was helping a partner to some sort of a *compôte* and the Hungarian band was slashing away at a waltz ! Truly, I am glad to be out of it—for a bit.

May 5th.—This morning, when I strolled out before breakfast, I found three yokels standing in the road staring at a broken egg ; then I met the butcher paddling along in carpet slippers, smoking a pipe ; and a boy, all neck and feet, throwing stones at a pony and two calves. There's life for you, hey ! There's movement !

Now that it is night I can hear Grace plodding at her piano, some Christy Minstrel ballad of simple sentiment. I do not think I will accept their offer to go in when I will and make music of my own. What would Grieg and Jensen and Rubinstein in E flat do in so simple and yet profound an atmosphere ? 'We are old-fashioned people,' they say, 'and all our furniture is old-fashioned ;' one end of the sofa even supported on bricks, as I

discover when I try to move it. We go to bed soon after nine and rise soon after five; our meat is bacon and salt pork, our treat a craggy cake and stiff preserve, our holiday a drive in the cart to Oxford. Our joys are simple, our sorrows the common sorrows of humanity. This afternoon I saw the two sisters kneeling in black over their father's recent grave, on which lay stiffly a wreath of black and white beads. Children were gathering buttercups among the mounds and sunken lichen-studded headstones. 'Tis strange and beautiful how Nature deals even with the memorials of death; for does she not level all the mounds, warp and break the wooden cross-pieces, draw down even the stones into the everlasting arms? There was a stone in that churchyard they can well remember—a nameless stone with only a verse from Job on it, now quite sunk and disappeared. Nature hath called the very tablet home.

The village dead all lie on the south side of the old, old irregular church; none on the north, for that is out of the sun. On the north, right against the church wall, the last incumbent used to grow his plum-trees. The north is bad and restless for the dead, but good for plums.

Ten o'clock strikes, and Grace flounders into an ancient polka, *temp.* Great Exhibition, 1851. And to think there are awnings in the squares, and linkmen, and kid gloves, and tuberoses, or whatever may be the fashionable flower! *O fumum strepitumque!* O cigarettes and babble!

I am tired. I have been playing on a pre-Reformation tennis court at the Rectory. The dappled light came and went through the great horse-chestnut, and an angel village-child stood behind us on the flower-border and picked up our balls. Dear England, great and merry still in all kinds of unregarded spots; Piccadilly may fume and fret and Bond Street smirk, self-conscious and smart, but here, against the ancient spire, climb and cling the everlasting blooms of kindness, simplicity, goodness.

Grace draws the heavy bolt and I will go to bed before I grow maudlin; and about a rectory too, with a belfry on it and an odd square, tinkling piano, and a bit of a river stealing below the orchard, threading the meadows and the willows.

May 7th.—The lark, that poor man's chorister, must have known I was going to the Rectory; he sang over me all the way, a guiding psalm. 'In the lark's house no smoke,' says the Gaelic proverb; and no smoke here in the happy lark's tall house in the

sky, all white and blue. All the way the lark and his fellows sang over me, down the road, across the fields, till I reached the village. That is the hall, built by Inigo Jones, they say, with battered griffins guarding the door, that looks as though it were never opened but to carry out the owners, feet first. The discoloured picture on the wall behind me comes from the old hall: Aunt Clorinda in the blue dress and sleeves of 1750. And next the hall the church, creeping down the hill, broken-backed, like a weary old lizard that tries to reach the water. The vane on the spire was put up seventy years ago; there's an old man in the village rode astride of it before they took down the scaffolding. Inside, age and decay and white-wash and churchwarden's handicraft everywhere. There's the old square pew of the old hall and the paper of the hymns sent down to Sir Arthur from the choir last Sunday, because he's so deaf he can't hear them announced. There's a monumental effort that came all the way from Italy—*O dulcis conjux!*—*O expensive grief!*—there's an epitaph by Waller in Waller's worst and blankest verse; there's the royal arms still bright and gilt, though they yet carry the lilies of France and are charged with the Hanoverian shield of pretence; there's a Norman font and the cherub of a departed fresco peering through the whitewash, and the churchwardens' names stamped large, 1836.

And in the Rectory, what peace, what plenty! They have been gentlefolks for centuries, and all round are the scattered possessions of such, gathered under this ancient roof. Portraits and silhouettes, old chairs, old tables, and, as though it were impossible to keep Maple and the Tottenham Court Road out, a great standard lamp, such as one sees on the stage nowadays in every comedy of modern manners. Down on all looks somewhat sternly the officer and gentleman in scarlet who wears the Waterloo medal. He was scarcely ever heard to speak of the battle till on his death-bed; when, all the fighting of his life being done, he fancied himself in the thick of it again. 'Why are you here, Mary?' he said to his daughter; 'this is no place for you. Steady, men! Here they come!'

Oh, gentle, graceful daughter of a kindly father, it grows even-tide and I must go home. The children are laughing in the village road; the ophicleide of the village band plays moodily from his cottage, 'God bless the Prince of Wales.' Home to my lodgings across the cowslip-fields, the stiles, along the coppice and the little wood, home to my frugal supper, my pipe, my sweet

rough bed, my pleasant waking in the morning. And on this day last week I was lunching in Piccadilly with two giddy-bonnets next a country couple who were eating pressed beef and drinking milk. The giddy-bonnets write me the Park is very full and London very gay. Ah, giddy-bonnets, *vous n'êtes pas dans le vrai!*

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‘Lane End Farm: May 9.

‘Dear Vernon,—I was very glad to get your letter, though the tone of it was not quite sufficiently serious altogether to please me. You are a curious creature, complaining that your clients will not let you alone. Was there ever a young barrister before who complained so heartily as you do that the solicitors will bring him work? Go to! Take the work and wake up that drowsy Divisional Court. Before I can get back to town they will have made you a Queen’s Counsel and the wig will have worn the top of your head bare. Young Q.C.’s are the fashion now. Go to!

‘I am here in a veritable farm and proud of myself for coming. What should I do in another London season? London seasons are bad for poor people like you and me; they wake every low and mean passion in our nature—envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness. Good heavens! When I think of the pangs I have endured, standing in the Row and watching the *beaux blondins* on their fine horses! Before I left you, however, I think I saw everything, went to all the private views and helped to start all the plays; and now I seem to do little else but write notes to say how glad I should have been to have come were I not, &c. &c. I thought of sticking up the cards in my spotted and distorted glass, but considered it would only carry amazement to the quiet heart of Grace, who waits on me. A good girl, Vernon, but, without being disrespectful, as thick as a Fleet Street beefsteak. Still, she has very pretty ears, and a face as round as a fairies’ ring in a meadow.

‘It’s all very well your writing to me, and my saying I would write to you, but what on earth am I to write about? You don’t care to know that I go to bed early (and don’t sleep) and get up late; that I work all the morning and then fetch the *Telegraph* from the post-office, where already I am at loggerheads with the old woman who keeps it; one of those vague old creatures who leans with purple knuckles and mittens worked with gilt beads on

the counter, and is sure she don't know, and can't tell, and the rest of it; that I doze after lunch and then go over to the Rectory to play tennis, sometimes, often, and back to supper in the dusk, and the reading of Balzac and Tolstoï, varied with the *Oxford Times*, and a battered copy of "Roderick Random," discovered wedged in between ancient books of devotion and broken-backed "Good Words." You will say, "Good Lord! and not a *belle âme* within a cab-radius to discuss Marie Bashkirtseff or Rudyard Kipling with, or that tiresome Village Priest, or Sargent's *dégringolade* this year in art?" No, truly, I thank heaven I am quit of them for a bit, and beginning to feel and know that the only true *belle âme* is she who is least conscious of possessing one.

'Oh, Vernon, Vernon, I am a bad fellow and you are a bad fellow. We ought both of us to be married, in little West Kensington flats called mansions—parsons' daughters, with a weeks at Broadstairs, and the rest of the year fighting for bread. It is strange, but when I was younger, very young, I used to wish and hope for such a fate: love and poverty, and two hearts that go tic-toc in barely furnished rooms. Well, there is a time for such wishing and such doing, and now I almost fear I have passed both. And yet! and yet!—Tush, Vernon, I am puling. And yet that corner of gentle domestic bliss and honest striving is yet warm in my heart, and some day may, perhaps, be blown into a fire. Vernon, you shall come and warm your hands at it, nervously, like Peter in the High Priest's hall, and eat boiled mutton.

'Now I must stop. I can see you all in chambers, and send you my compliments. Brooke has his coat off and is blowing down that eternal gurgling pipe; Platt is raging over the eight hours' business and Hyde Park meetings; Welsby is selecting a knobby bit of coal to throw at the cats; and Archibald wishing to goodness it was four o'clock, that he can go play tennis in the gardens. A rap at the door; *de la tenue, messieurs!* A client? No, only this scrawl from your country friend to Vernon Boyle, Esq., of Fountain Court, Inner Temple. Adoo!'

Sunday night.—Grace is playing a hymn, slowly and heavily; her sister sings—I only hear the shrill high notes—while Mr. Frank, I suppose, sits by smoking moodily (Sankey and Moodily) under the comforting impression he is doing something religious. Mr. Frank was quietly jubilant the last time I saw him; he had

swopped a cow that had given up presenting them with milk for a horse; an old horse, though, fit only to go and do a little work in the fields. Since then I have been a trudge round, over some twenty miles of country, brilliant with the harebell, vocal with the cuckoo. At Burfote I had tea in a village mug-house, kept by the widow; her pretty daughter brought it me, stood over me smiling to inquire whether I would not have another cup, more toast. She was making a little bouquet of forget-me-not and cowslips, preparatory to walking into Abingdon to the circus. With her young man? She blushinglly avers she has not got one, is not old enough yet, only seventeen. There was a postman there when I arrived, with an uncomfortable yellow jealous film over him; departed with a scowl and daresayed he would see her again in Abingdon. In her rustic fashion I could see Rosie was making the man just as effectually miserable as if she were a Mayfair smart young woman and he a Guardsman fresh from Eton. In the bar, as I passed out, there was a gardener shouting and singing, his eyes shining, his hat on the back of his head. 'You be trusting your darter to nice company to Abingdon,' he roared to the widow. But the widow only laughed, knowing the gardener's way and how safe Rosie would be with him, a steady young married man whose constant high spirits and singing gave anyone who did not know him the impression of his being everlastinglly in liquor. As I strolled along I heard the gardener singing lustlly behind me, and soon the little company caught me up. Rosie had a friend with her, a pretty serious girl of sixteen, in a straw hat and the most luxuriant hair. They were already very hot with walking, being by direction of their mothers in thick garments because of the chilly night walk home. Rosie's friend had only been to a circus once before, seven years ago, in Cumberland, and never to a play; both were in a subdued state of excitement, sucking large peppermint lozenges with pink mottoes on them. Mine was, 'Love me little, love me long.' Jennie took hers out and found the ghost of 'You may trust him' on it. They were wrapped in a page torn from a copybook and proved a great comfort to us. So we walked along in the most simple, trusting fashion, but soon got so hot it was found necessary to pile the gardener with the heavy jackets and fur tippets. He roared like Polyphemus, waved his stick, but submitted; it was clear everyone submitted to Rosie. At Calford we caught up the postman with his letter-bags. 'Brown from Yorksheer!'

shouted the gardener to him. 'No; Brooks from Sheffield,' said I. It appeared that the gardener and the postman had a habit of writing down Rosie's young men—'Anyone who speaks to me,' laughed and blushed Rosie; and I was the latest, 'Brooks from Sheffield.' And so we progressed that bright May evening, the sun westering, till at last the white circus tent was in sight over the bridge of Abingdon, down by the water's edge, over against timber stacks, and we could hear the ineffable circus big drum. And there I left them, Rosie beating an impatient foot to the brassy opening polka, while the gardener, the postman, and a heavy young man named Peter passed round a large blue and white mug at the alehouse door by way of parting. My only refreshment had been the peppermint motto, and the young ladies' a bottle of lemonade. The one drawback, shall I say? to our complete happiness was poor Rosie's chilblains, caught from serving in the bar and washing up the glasses; the warmer she got, the more they tingled.

I slept at Abingdon, and next day strolled into Oxford through Bagley Wood, my companion from half-way a printer from the University Press, with huge bundles of harebells. As we entered the town he wrapped them in his neckcloth and at Folly Bridge we parted. He thanked me for my company and said, 'Twas wonderful how short the road seemed when there were two to share it.' 'You see,' said I, 'we have each taken half.' We met the usual undergraduates in pairs, the usual Don alone with his dog, and soon I was at lunch with one of them, talking over the days when we were in chambers together.

Then I walked back again through Nuneham and Dorchester, and was home at nine for supper. I find Mr. Frank plays hymns too; I am beginning to know his *touch*, shall I call it? But, then, remember, 'tis heavy land hereabouts.

May 19th.—The days pass and resemble each other; I work as hard as I can and oversmoke myself and am happy. A strong sweet wind is blowing to-day, making the apple blossoms tremble.

This morning we found an ex-groom in a faded M.C.C. tie to show us the old Quaker burial-ground that lies just off the village green. The meeting-house has become a schoolroom for little ladies and gentlemen who are driven in in the morning for instruction, in governess and ralli carts, and out again at four. As I was going over to the Rectory I was always meeting a nest

of such small sunbonnets in a light cart. The school door was open and I could see in among the tiny scholars. The graveyard lies at the back, and a weedy, ragged place of buttercups for death, to be sure. Old West, the father of Benjamin, second president of the Academy, rests somewhere among them, but I couldn't find him. It reminded me of nothing so much as the burial-ground in a gaol, the one I saw at Stafford for example: here, under one hummuck, Palmer, the poisoner, and under another, as nameless and formless, a female murderess, and so on. At the back, a door leads on to a narrow path that under elms and alongside a brook draggles down to Shillingford. They call it still the 'Quaker's path,' though 'tis years since a gray bonnet trod it.

Vickerman, who has been staying with me, has gone back to town. A queer creature; I think the twig got bent wrong early in life and will only grow into a gnarled and distorted old tree—of that kind in whose branches in Parisian suburbs they build a restaurant. He wonders I don't hire the schoolroom for a night or two and lecture to the villagers—'Some London scandals I have known'—or 'Half-hours with prominent humbugs.'

The Forge.—In the forge this wet evening the sparks fly briskly. Ben and Ted, sworn brothers of the anvil, are hammering away at a redhot garden pick. Poor Ted has got a swollen face from toothache, suffers a deal from his teeth, will go to Wallingford next market-day and have it out. The swelling causes him to make all his c's into t's in a very odd fashion, and he tells me of when he was in Tanada and crossed the sea. He was earning high wages in Buffalo and living comfortably in a boarding-house for four dollars a week, when his father died, and he had to come home to look after the forge for his mother. His mother, a blinking and wrinkled old woman, knitting a stocking, comes to the door to watch him at work; I think she wants to make sure that her lad is there, and not away in Buffalo.

Ben is a fat and massive man, with an arm he bares for me to see its muscle. On one forearm is a Scotch girl da-ancing on a ball and waving a triangular flag, on the other figures what Ted calls a meer-maid; both tattooed in blue, done by a comrade when he was soldiering. Ben confesses he was brought up in a tent, under a hedge, and never had any teaching of any sort. His father, he tells me, was married to as neat and clean a woman as anyone could wish for, but she fell into bad habits and they parted; an infidelity drove him, as many another, into the tents and the

wilderness. 'He was a good scholar,' says Ben, 'father was, and spent a deal of time reading the paper,' but he never offered to teach him any of it. He had a caravan worth a hundred pounds, three or four young horses that went behind, thirty feet of eating stall, and many other possessions that got scattered when he died. The wife took to a second-hand clothes shop in Middlesex, and offered to come and see the father at the last, but he would have none of her. Ben enlisted in November, '72; then passed into the Reserve, and was finally returned unfit by the Wallingford doctor, as having only one lung. Asked where his father came from, depones it was a charity school in London, in which fantastic city he had an uncle a lord and another a master butcher. Once the lord was moved to sending his humble relative half a five-pound note, the other half to follow, but it never came. Forgets the nobleman's name—Wastie something; only he knows he was his father's uncle. I can guess what sort of looking man father was, since he once made himself a pair of breeches out of a pillow-case. Of two brothers, one, a grave-digger in the East Indies, got sunstroke when working at his trade; the other still lives near Oxford, and 'don't do much, not so much as he ought.' Who does? To conclude, Ben is a devout Wesleyan Methodist, and goes on Sundays to the prim and drab little chapel that almost faces the forge.

Thursday.—Globes of fire hung over me in the dusky palpitating night, and all low and yellow the sickle moon. The night birds called to each other, the road was white, and far down it gleamed the lamp of my little sitting-room.

This evening, as I crossed Shillingford Bridge, a figure in white trousers leaped out of the inn window and ran across the lawn to me. Redburn, whom I hadn't seen since I saw him at the head of his troop in the Belfast riots, glaring like a youthful Picton down a side street where the factions had got at each other. 'There's a deuce of a row down there,' said he to me grimly, who had come out to see the fun, and pushed his horse through the yelling crowd. Now he and his subaltern had rowed up from Wallingford, where the regiment was halting on the march from Liverpool to Aldershot. Three dusty troopers rode over the bridge past us as we talked against the railings. 'Eyes right!' They were as stern as death. A moment before they saw us they were chaffing a girl in a cart. *Sancta disciplina!* Then a couple of young women on tricycles, one in a tight red bodice, talking

with the affected precision and unnatural calm young women affect when they know they're being watched. The subaltern was especially interested. 'A canter past—pure swagger; turns in her own length, by Gad!' We could hear them still talking loudly as they went up the hill. We lay on the lawn and smoked, talking of old schoolfellows, how some we hated and some we loved, their marriages, failures, deaths. I saw them off on the river again with their rough-haired terrier. Redburn says he shall stick to soldiering, there's nothing else he can do. He seems absolutely the same to me as when he used to back-stop in the first-fifth game, a stubborn brown creature with a hard prominent forehead and great strong jaw. A born cavalry officer, who in Peninsular days would have been by now covered with medals and wounds and glory; needing now, indeed, only a great war to bring him to the front. The readiness is all! Just think how many great reputations must have died unmade in the long peace between 1815 and 1854!

May 23rd.—A ghost story. I heard it in the punt at evening on the little river, the buttercups winking against the low and glowing sky, the water-rats shaking, bright-eyed, at their doors.

The Duc de Montebello tells it in the Red Sea to a Colonel coming home, shaken to pieces with Indian fever. Scene, Mexico, in the war, just before the fall of the unhappy Maximilian; orders very strict against plundering, next man caught to be shot at once, whoever he may be. Next man caught, Sergeant la Tulipe, bravest, brightest, most popular of non-coms.; most deplorable he should be the man; still, orders must be carried out, though Bazaine gave the order almost in tears, so popular with all ranks is Sergeant la Tulipe. So, as he is caught in the dusk, in the dusk they shoot him, in a dreary little ditch, his back against an adobe wall; a lantern, terrible bull's-eye, hung round his neck; and the volley over, there they lay him, still quivering, lantern and life both gone out, there can be no doubt of it, over against the adobe wall. But, before the shots rattle, la Tulipe in anguish bids the *padre*, endeavouring to guide his last footsteps aright—bids him carry the message of his death, his honourable death in action, to his poor old mother at Plessis-sur-Saône, '*Estaminet, Débit de Tabac, Vins et Cidre,*' over painted crossed billiard cues tied with blue ribbon. And the *padre* promises and the Sergeant says, '*Souviens-toi!*' thrice solemnly,

before the fatal volley that, as I say, stretches him quivering in the dreary little ditch where he is buried. There can be no doubt of it at all. But, observe, later in the evening the officers in the mess tent, Duc de Montebello amongst them, talking of this and that and somewhat of the luckless la Tulipe, deploring him, no doubt. '*Qui va là ?*' from the sentry outside. '*Qui va là ?*' again, sharply, and then a shot ; and lo, through the door of the mess tent passes la Tulipe, death in his face and on his breast, only the lantern burning round his neck, stands there calm and unearthly while a man could count ten ! And then the Duc draws revolver and fires. A crash and a moan, or rather a deep portentous sigh, and *messieurs les officiers* are alone again, with a smoking revolver and the shattered remains of a lantern. Instantly to the grave of Sergeant la Tulipe, under the adobe wall, and see, he lies on his face instead of on his back, as they put him there, and the lantern has gone ; alone he lies, dead beyond a doubt of it.

Soon in the hurry of war all this is forgotten, and the unhappy Maximilian himself being shot, undergoing the fate of poor Sergeant la Tulipe against an adobe wall of a rather better class, all return to France, to forget in the joys of the boulevard and the *coulisses* that such things ever had been. And the *padre* goes too, to enjoy himself as a *padre* may in a brilliant capital, and forgets all about *la mère la Tulipe*, who lives and cooks, amid the click of the billiard-balls, away in the little *estaminet* in sleepy Plessis-sur-Saône, and wonders what her *gars* is after that he does not write. Till one day, meeting M. le Duc somewhere, perhaps on the boulevard, M. le Duc asks him if ever he has remembered the dying Sergeant's request, and the *padre* says, '*Mais, ma foi, oui—parfaitement !*' and that some day he will do it—'*tout à l'heure, tout à l'heure ;*' but does it not ; till one night, going home late, as sometimes a *padre* will, round a corner he meets the Sergeant, lantern at neck, grisly, grey, reproachful ; and the *padre*, with a yell of terror, falls dead. Only, the Duc said, the *bonhomme* met a '*chiffonnier, je crois*,' with a lantern and stick with nail at the end. Still, conscience and fear and the night did the rest, and the *padre* fell and died. '*Indubitablement.*'

May 30.—I am getting into a bad way ; I am breaking into poetry. 'Lord, we know what we are, but we know not what we may be !'

ROMANCE IN E.

I.

The room is dusky; there she sits,
 And plays the well-known air,
 While dim the windy moonlight flits
 About her braided hair;
 And borne from out the summer dark
 I hear the village watch-dog bark.

II.

She plays the air, and I recall
 How first I heard it by the sea;
 I know each chord, remember all
 The meaning it once held for me;
 That bitter autumn in the rain,
 Old scar, in which I yet feel pain.

III.

And as she plays, thank God, my heart
 Beats strong with thankfulness and joy,
 That I have lived and played my part,
 A man, and not a lovesick boy;
 A man I come to her and cry,
 'Play for me, dearest, till I die!'

I was strolling in the fields, trying to find the last rhymes, when I came plump on a little man with a brown-grey beard and foolish sot's eyes, suddenly standing in front of me, sucking at a black wooden pipe. He was dressed in a sort of lichen-coloured coat, burst and stained, wore black trousers and bulgy boots, and carried a very thick, highly-varnished stick.

'Why are yer hiding yerself?—peevish and out of sorts?' said he. 'Eh?—unless they're all fools and liars!' I looked at him, and saw in his cheeks, ridged with puce-coloured ruchings, and a thickened nose, that I had to do with an habitual whisky-drinker. He was full of hard breathings and gurgles of empty, choking laughter. We stood facing each other, talking for some little time, he incoherently assuring me he knew me quite well; had travelled 14,000 miles in four months; hadn't seen the Prince of Wales since they parted in America; could quote anything out of Shakespeare; had read more before he was five-and-twenty than he'd ever have time to remember; had lost 1,000*l.* in the panic on Black Friday—'Never see such faces, never shall again, as I see walking up and down Lombard Street that day;'—was nearly shot by a Red Indian lurking behind a tree; had gone up

to him and marched him into camp with a revolver; would swop his stick against mine; and, finally, would walk me into the village. 'We're like the shepherds on Sorsbury Plain,' said he thickly, 'who talk 'gether houranalf and then found both going same way.' Yes, he lived in the village—course, where else?—owned property there, quarrelling with Magdalen College about it; lived there long enough to acquirer title; didn't go to London, too expensive; lost 1,000*l.* there on Black Friday in one day—in one day!! Lived in the village and got drunk sometimes. Whisky? what was whisky but nitric acid and sulphuric acid? Children? Sons, bigger than me. None of 'em about, couldn't be bothered to know where they were. See that poplar, tall tree? That was his poppuler. See that house? Good-looking women in that house. Who lived there? Lawyer lived there; go and make a call. Not this evening? S'm'other evening; get over hedge if we like. 'Now let's go to Tanner's, Joe Tanner's.' Bursts into a choke of laughter when I remind him that I don't know Joe Tanner. Won't hear of it—'s all my pretence. He stands in the road, pointing the varnished stick at the cottage next door to the lawyer and the good-looking women. 'My prop'ty,' he says, 'isn't it, Miss's Champion?' Mrs. Champion, an old lady leaning over the gate, treats him with silent contempt. 'My prop'ty, far as the poppuler; dispute with Magdalen College.' 'Is he your neighbour?' I called out to Mrs. Champion. 'He lives next door,' said the old lady angrily. 'Is he a good neighbour?' 'He's a very ba-ad neighbour, he wants somebody dra-aing him through the harse-pond!' The old man snorts with laughter. 'Come on,' he says, 'she's no good.' 'His wife's a good woman enough,' calls Mrs. Champion after us, 'and he's a ba-ad, noisy, drunken old man, and he wants dra-aing through the harse-pond!' 'She lives on my prop'ty,' says the old man, knocking out his pipe on a short thick hand; 'old fool!' 'Ah! Joe Tamplin!'—this in a warning note to a foolish-looking young man walking with his arm in that of a young woman who looked uncommonly severe at the sight of us. 'Ah!—Dressmaker from Bensing,' he said to me. 'Why, she's as tall as he is.' 'Engaged to be married?' 'I don't know. She's a dressmaker from Bensing, tell you. Joe lives with his aunt there. Nice house. My prop'ty.'

I was getting a little tired of the old man, evidently a village Monsieur Pimbèche, and desired to drop him before going to Joe

Tanner's; so I made a disposition to walk off to the left, home over the fields. 'Don't be weak,' he said almost tearfully; 'come Joe Tanner's, this way.' There was a boy standing against the wall, wondering who I was to walk about with so well-known and disreputable a character; and on my inquiring whether I was right to go to the left or on by Joe Tanner's, 'Left,' he said, 'so fur's the stile, and then cross the medder,' and so on. 'You're a liar, young Weller,' said the old man; 'all the Wellers liars.' 'You're a liar,' said the boy sturdily, making ready to run from the varnished stick. 'What sort of an old man is he?' I asked. 'Gets drunk,' said the boy. 'Anything else?' 'I don't know,' the boy replied stupidly. So after a slight and awkward pause—the old man breathing very heavily—I went to the left; the old man finding his voice to cry after me not to be weak, and the boy dashing in to pick up the penny I threw him.

'Come over and see you one afternoon,' I said, 'and have a talk;' and so came late over the fields home to supper.

June 1. *The 'Barley-mow.'*—The shifting sunlight falls into the yellow and white kitchen of the 'Barley-mow,' where I sit at tea, through the little square window-panes, diamond-scrawled, on to the stone floor. Hams in white bags hang up the shiny black chimney, a sketch-book and a knapsack are on the chair. There are women's voices from the parlour, not quite ladies' voices. I met them crossing the bridge with strides of the corps-de-ballet, a sort of taking the stage way; straw hats and shirts; *Frisette* and *Musette sur l'eau*. They like to get away into a field and get handsful of moon-daisies, being truly superstitious. They like to recall the time when they were gardener's daughters and be simple once more. No, they want to go alone, please. They don't want any company when they pick flowers; the past is all the more difficult for them to recall in company.

Odd households, even in the country; in peaceful farms, covered with wisteria, and the grapes already beginning to think of their bunches along the front and over the door. I was staying in such a one last night. Ducks and fowls, cherry-trees, and a huge creaking pump; every country sound and sight; and inside, a *ménage à trois*—husband, wife, and friend: a broken-down hotel-keeper and wife, and a shady solicitor with vicious, ragged grey whiskers, and a straw hat as battered as his face. As the bells for church were ringing, I saw the husband conducting the friend to the farmyard gate, pointing him the way to church;

the friend having dressed himself in black with a rackety tall hat, looking altogether like a Haymarket horse-dealer. The parson comes and dines with them occasionally in the kitchen, and guffaws over a pipe.

There is a very pretty girl there in the farm, maid and nursery-governess combination, and the parson desired to question her about her religious condition; but she, with the unerring instinct of a woman, scented the absence of the monk under the hood, and would have none of him. 'Jacynthe, my child, thou art right to go hide in the orchard; fill not his reverence's pipe; confess not thyself to that black and scowling phiz.'

'A mad world, my masters!' The hostess of the 'Barley-mow,' in a red jersey, laughs shrilly and flies hither and thither; the ladies scream with laughter in the parlour; then the deeper voices of the men; then the church bells for evening service. So the world jangles. Now they are singing 'The Anchor's Weighed' most woefully out of tune.

June 5th.—Friendly people: I must say I like friendly people. To drive in among them at a tennis party, a complete stranger, and yet be warmly welcomed; the mamma at once to ask your opinion as to whether she can take her daughters on the barges at Oxford; the father to conduct you over the church and tell you everything; the daughters to smile trimly and, when it rains a little, to sing to you the society ballads of three years ago. The tennis court is uneven, the play weak, but what of that? Doves and pigeons flutter and swoop and are terrified with tennis balls. Among us all only one superior female in a tight black silk, quite a private-view sort of dress; she sits all her length, talking slip-slop out of a society paper, when a tennis-ball dumps her on her long nose. Fashionable consternation! But I cannot help being glad, and laugh behind my racket. I know her sort so well: she presses one of the nice trim girls to sing and talks all through it, pecks at her through her veil when she is going, and tells her she must come and spend the day and sing to her again. She disappears with a smile like a bad photograph, convinced we are all delighted with her and envy her her charming manners. Present also a youth with the most enormous Sandhurst side on; six months with his regiment will knock all that out of him. Also present two young ladies of the ineffective sort I cannot conceive as being any good or satisfaction to anyone. Trim daughter gives me syringa when we part; she is one large healthy

blush. She says, 'It's such nonsense me singing!' but she sings away, trills and plays her own accompaniments, and I sit and watch her bright and pretty profile. Good-bye, friendly people! May I land some other day again in your green and fresh island, may your welcome be as sincere and I only worthy of it. They wave to me from the porch as I drive off in my ramshackle trap with the depressed little pony.

A quiet week. June 7th to 14th.

Monday.—Worked all morning; read and dozed over 'Ecclesiastical Affinities'; vast amount of moral priggishness in it. Many letters and out on to river; long and steady pull.

Tuesday.—Left razor at forge. Ben has gone and is leaning over palings, smoking and waiting for haymaking. Over by cart to Rectory for tennis. Drunken driver, pretty blue eyes, driving horse with new rope reins; cursed and wept, the whole gamut of beer. Oh, very drunk he was; had to get a load of hay and drive back to Wallingford. Cried fearfully at the thought of leaving his mother. Never would; *ne-ver would!*

Wednesday.—Dark all day. Superb evening; on to river as far as Benson Lock. Boatkeeper was ambitious after a house in the village and lodgers; wife an hexcellent cook, hexcellent cook! Very odd, it is the only *h* I have heard him misplace. I fancy he thinks it is the right word.

Thursday.—Wet. Telegraphed a friend, who is producing a play, best wishes for success. Paid a call; not in. View into odd, bare, old oak hall; like a house in the sixteenth century. Long dull walk; met rather a pretty woman. We stared at each other in the who-the-deuce-are-you sort of way.

Friday.—To Rectory. Met smart girl driving low dogcart; white tie, waistcoat, and all that kind of thing. Chess. Brilliant night. Walk over fields home.

Saturday.—Steamer to Oxford. Opposite the barges, the hour seven, youth plunging off the rafts and lunging across the brown tepid water; upsetting themselves from pure joy in the golden evening out of canoes and dingies. Oxford city, grey and cool in the twilight; drove up in a hansom just in time for dinner, took in long girl, sister of a Don, and very like her brother in all respects, being donnish.

Sunday.—Long trudge round Blenheim; a noble pile, fit for a nation's gift to a great soldier. The oaks are planted and seem to advance on the palace in the order the regiments were stationed

on the immortal day itself. Dined at college high table; we drank wine to each other; common room afterwards and '63 port, quantity of it. Found two old schoolfellows were fellows; talk on all imaginable subjects; they both regret their lives, the undergraduate past; pipes after hall and the endless philosophical jargon of two and twenty. Drove home in hansom; sentimental; streets and colleges dark and looming in heavy wet night air. Enjoyed evening immensely; '63 port.

And next day steamer home again to Day's Lock. Hopelessly dull fellow-passengers, all of them. Husband and wife; wife says, 'There's a barge, do you see, George?' and they both stare at it till it passes. Girl works a stocking in spectacles; admire her courage in putting them on publicly; husband picks out places on river panorama. Fearful man comes to ask fearful woman how she is getting on. 'Naicely, thanks!' As for me, I read 'Noctes Ambrosianæ,' and keep up my character for superiority.

June 16th.—Oh, happy day, so soon gone! and yet to rest always in my memory, like the dance of the daffodils.

June 17th.—Orchestral practice, if you please; Spohr's 'Last Judgment.' I carry the fiddle-case and find them all tuning up; sounds like the blessed theatre. The general bends over his 'cello and saws away as though he were cutting wood. 'Grieg's concerto? Who plays Grieg's concerto?' 'Why, I do;' I, a shy, odd girl, whom I should just have thought capable of managing 'Echoes from Killarney.' Really, one never knows anything about anybody, nor ever shall, till we meet *là haut*, and all secrets are discovered. What surprises there will be then; how we shall have misunderstood each other! Just consider how we most of us struggle to express ourselves nobly in the grand manner, and, notwithstanding, only squeaks come. It rains, and I sit quietly below in the Temperance refreshment-room and read the illustrated papers a month old. I feel as though I were at the dentist's, and the musical struggles up above suggest the cries of the tortured.

June 18th.—I met Ted of the forge in the village, bag on shoulder, on his way to a job. He tells me Ben is still out of work, and will be till the haymaking sets in regularly. When I ask him how the wife and children live meantime, he says the neighbours give them an occasional meal. And then Ben has the happy digestive faculty of being able to make something out

of what turns most other people's stomachs. If a beast dies—for instance, a sheep or a pig—the nature of the disease does not seem to affect Ben, who begs the remains and feasts royally. Meantime, he smokes in the happiest, laziest fashion, and I see his children, brown and healthy, running about with old hoops and broken biscuit tins, much merrier than little princes.

June 20th.—This time to-morrow night I shall be at a dance, as inane as anyone in the room. But oh, I am wae, wae at leaving this little chamber of mine with one step down, the geraniums in saucers, the sliding windows, the samplers, broken sofa, round table that has so often groaned under the weight of my elbows and my thought! My mind is whitewashed, the cobwebs gone, and in the attic of my brain sits a gentle image, her bright head bent, modest, pure and simple. I see her in a vision like Margaret at her wheel. Good-bye, my dear! In trouble and temptation I shall turn to you. Like the Madonna on the ship, tossed ship of my wandering and stormy course, thou shalt be for me the protecting saint, and the little lamp that burns before thee shall, if God will, be a guide for me to the stars!

A BRIDE FROM THE BUSH.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SOCIAL INFLICTION.

HAPPILY for all concerned, there was something else to be thought about that day: it was the day of Lady Bligh's garden-party.

The British garden-party is possibly unique among the social gatherings of the world. It might be a revelation to most intelligent foreigners. It is held, of course, in the fresh air; the weather, very likely, is all that can be desired. The lawn is soft and smooth and perfectly shaven; sweeping shadows fall athwart it from the fine old trees. The flower-beds are splendidly equipped; their blended odours hover in the air. The leaves whisper and the birds sing. The scene is agreeably English. But let in the actors. They are English too. The hostess on the lawn receiving the people, and slipping them through her busy fingers into solitude and desolation—anywhere, anywhere, out of her way; the stout people in the flimsy chairs, in horrid jeopardy which they alone do not realise; the burly, miserable male supers, in frock-coats and silk-hats, standing at ease (but only in a technical sense) around the path, ashamed to eat the ices that the footman proffers them, ashamed of having nobody to talk to but their sisters or wives—who are worse than no one: it is so feeble to be seen speaking only to *them*. This is the British garden-party in the small garden, in the suburbs. In the large garden, in the country, you may lose yourself among the fruit-trees without being either missed or observed; but this is not a point in favour of the institution. And even in suburban districts there are bold spirits that aspire to make their garden-parties different to everybody else's, and not dull; who write 'Lawn Tennis' in the corner of their invitation-cards before ascertaining the respective measurements of a regulation court and of their own back gardens. But beware of these ambitious souls; they add yet another terror to the British garden-party. To go in flannels and find everybody else in broadcloth; to be received as a champion player in consequence, and asked whether you have 'entered at Wimbledon'; to be made to play in every set (because you are the only man in

flannels), with terrible partners, against adversaries more terrible still—with the toes of the on-lookers on the side lines of the court, and the dining-room windows in peril, should you but swing back your racket for your usual smashing service, once in a way, to show them how it is done: all this amounts to putting in your afternoon in purgatory, in the section reserved for impious lawn-tennis players. Yet nothing is more common. The lawn must be utilised, either for lawn-tennis, or for bowls (played with curates), or by the erection of a tent for refreshments. By Granville's intervention, the Blighs had the refreshment-tent.

Lady Bligh would not have given garden-parties at all, could she have been 'at home' in any other way; but as her set was largely composed of people living actually in town, who would not readily come ten miles out for a dinner-party, still less for an after-dinner party, she had really no choice in the matter. Still, Lady Bligh's garden-parties were not such very dull affairs after all. They were very much above the suburban average. To the young and the curious they held out attractions infinitely greater than garden-party lawn-tennis, though these could not be advertised on the cards of invitation. For instance, you were sure of seeing a celebrity or two, if not even the highest dignitaries with some of the dignity in their pockets. And it is inexpressible how delightful it was to come across a group of Her Majesty's Judges gorging strawberry ices unblushingly in a quiet corner of the marquee. On the present occasion, when the stoutest and most pompous Q.C. at the Bar—Mr. Merivale—sat down on the slenderest chair in the garden, and thence, suddenly, upon the grass, the situation was full of charm for Granville and some of his friends, who vied with one another in a right and proper eagerness to help the great man to his feet. Even Gladys (who was so very far from being in a laughing mood) laughed at this; though she was not aware that the stout gentleman was a Q.C., nor of the significance of those initials, had anyone told her so.

But this was all the entertainment that Gladys extracted from the long afternoon. She was amused, at the moment, in spite of herself; she was not amused a second time. She kept ingeniously in the background. Alfred was attentive to her, of course, but not foolishly attentive, this afternoon. And Granville introduced to her one of his clean-shaven friends, whom Gladys conversed with for perhaps a minute. She was also presented by the Judge—in his recent genial, fatherly manner—to one or two of

his colleagues. Plainly, the disgraceful scene in Hyde Park had not yet reached Sir James's ears. But that scandal was being discreetly discussed by not a few of the guests. Gladys suspected as much, though she did not know it. She imagined herself to be a not unlikely subject of conversation in any case, but quite a tempting one in the light of her last escapade. But this idea did not worry her. In some moods it is possible to be acutely self-conscious without being the least sensitive ; Gladys's present mood was one. More often than at the people, she gazed up at the window of her own room, and longed to be up there, alone. She neither took any interest in what was going on around her, nor cared what the people were whispering concerning her. No doubt they *were* whispering, but what did it matter ? Misery is impervious to scorn and ridicule and contempt. These things wound the vanity ; misery deadens it. Gladys was miserable.

Among the later arrivals was Miss Travers. Her father could not come : he was doing the fair thing by the Party and his constituents : it was his first term. Miss Travers came alone, and intended to go back alone, the later the better. Whitechapel had made her fearless and independent. She rather hoped to be asked to stop to dinner : some people were certain to stay, for the Blighs were uncommonly hospitable, and in many things quite unconventional ; and Miss Travers intended to be one of those people, if she got the opportunity. She also intended to cultivate the most original specimen of her sex that she had ever yet met with ; and for this she tried to make the opportunity.

But the most original of her sex was also one of the most slippery, when she liked ; she dodged Miss Travers most cleverly, until the pursuer was herself pursued, and captured. Her captor was a rising solicitor, a desirable gentleman and an open admirer, but he did not improve his chances by that interview. Miss Travers was disappointed, almost annoyed. The unlucky lawyer sought to make her smile with a story : the story of the '*coooo!*' (he knew her intimately) as he had heard it. Her appreciation of humour was vast, for a woman ; he knew she would be tickled. But, unfortunately, the version he had heard was already fearfully exaggerated, and, as Miss Travers drew him on gently, yet without smiling as he wished her to, the good fellow improvised circumstances still more aggravating and scandalous ; and then—sweet Miss Travers annihilated him in a breath.

'I was in their carriage at the time, myself ; but—you will

excuse my saying so—I shouldn't have recognised the incident from your description !'

It was a staggerer ; but Miss Travers did not follow up the blow. She reproved him, it is true, but so kindly, and with such evident solicitude for his moral state, that the wretch was in ecstasies in two minutes.

'At all events,' he said, with enthusiasm, 'she has you for her champion ! I won't hear another word about her ; I'll champion her too !'

'If you spoke to her for one moment,' Miss Travers replied, 'you would own yourself that she is charming. You never saw such eyes !'

This the lawyer seemed to question, by the rapt manner in which he peered into Miss Travers's own eyes ; but the speech was the prettier for being left unspoken ; and here the lawyer showed some self-restraint and more wisdom. But immediately the lady left him : she had descried her quarry.

Gladys dodged again, and, passing quickly through the tent, heard two words that sent the blood to her cheeks. The words were in close conjunction—'cooee !' and 'disgrace.' Without turning to see who had uttered them—the voice was unfamiliar—she hurried through into the house, and finding the little morning-room quite empty, went in there to sit down and think.

She was not wounded by the chance words ; her lifeless pride had not quickened and become vulnerable all in a moment—it was not that. But it was this : what she had done she realised now, for the first time, fully. Disgrace ! She had disgraced Lady Bligh, Sir James, Alfred, Granville, all of them ; in a public place, she, the interloper in the family, had brought down disgrace upon them all. Disgrace !—that was what people were saying. Disgrace to the Blighs—that was why she minded what the people said. And she minded this so much now that she rocked herself to and fro where she sat, and wrung her large strong hands, and groaned aloud.

And it was not only once ; she had disgraced them many times. And all had been forgiven. But this could never be forgiven.

If only she had never married poor Alfred ; if only she had never come among his family, to behave worse than their very servants ! The servants ? Would Bella Bunn have behaved so in her place ? It was not likely, for even Bella had been able to give her hints, and she had consulted Bella upon points on which

she would have been ashamed to confess her ignorance, even to Alfred. But, in spite of all their hints and their patience, she had brought only unhappiness to them all; there could be no more happiness for them or for her while she remained in the family.

'I ought to be dead—or back in the Bush!' she cried again, in her heart. 'Oh, if only one was as easy as the other!'

These were her sole longings. Of the two, one was strong and not new (being intensified, not produced, by the circumstances), but sufficiently impracticable. The other was easy to compass, easy to the point of temptation, but as yet not nearly so strong, being entirely the impulse of events. But neither longing was at present anything more than a longing; no purpose showed through either yet. The reality of Alfred's love, the feeling that it would kill him to lose her, was accountable for this. Gladys's resolution was, so far, a blank tablet, not because purpose was absent, but because it was not yet become visible.

An analogy may be borrowed from the sensitive film used for the production of a photographic negative. The impression is taken, yet the film remains blank as it was before, until the proper acid is applied, when the impression becomes visible.

Now, a moral acid, acting upon that blank tablet of the mind, would produce a precisely similar effect. Suppose Gladys became convinced that Alfred would be a happier man without her, that it would be even a relief to him to lose her: this would supply the moral acid.

The effect of this moral acid would coincide with that of the photographer's acid. In either case something that had been imperceptible hitherto would now start out in sharp outline. The blank film would yield the negative picture; the vague longings of Gladys would take the shape of two distinct alternatives, one of them inevitable.

Suppose this happened, one of these alternatives was so simple as to be already, in its embryo state, something of a temptation; while the other would remain a moral impossibility.

It must be remembered that the Bride confronted no alternatives yet, but merely experienced vague, passionate longings. In this state of mind, however, but one drop of acid was needed to produce development.

CHAPTER XIV.

‘HEAR MY PRAYER!’

MISS TRAVERS did not, after all, succeed in cornering Gladys at the garden-party, but she did contrive to get herself asked to stay later, and without much difficulty (she would probably have found it far more difficult to go with the rest—hostesses were tenacious of Miss Travers); and after dinner, when the ladies went off to the drawing-room, her stubborn waiting was at last rewarded.

Some other people had stayed to dinner also, in the same informal way, and among them one or two of Granville’s friends. These young men had come to the garden-party by no advice of Gran’s—in fact, those who chanced to have mentioned to him Lady Bligh’s invitation he had frankly told to stay away and not to be fools. But, having come, he insisted on their staying. ‘For,’ he said, ‘you deserve compensation, you fellows; and the Judge’s wine, though I say it, hasn’t a fault—unless it’s spoiling a man for his club’s.’

And while the young men put the truth of this statement to a more earnest test than could be applied before the ladies left the table, Miss Travers, in the drawing-room, at last had Gladys to herself. And Miss Travers was sadly disappointed—as, perhaps, she deserved to be. Gladys had very little to say to her. As a matter of fact, it was no less irksome to the Bride to listen than to talk herself. But they happened to be sitting close to the piano, and it was not long before a very happy thought struck Gladys, which she instantly expressed in the abrupt question:

‘You sing, Miss Travers, don’t you?’

‘In a way.’

‘In a way! I’ve heard all about the way!’ Gladys smiled; Miss Travers thought the smile sadly changed since yesterday. ‘Sing now.’

‘You really want me to?’

‘Yes, really. And you must.’ Gladys opened the piano.

Miss Travers sang a little song that Gladys had never heard before, accompanying herself from memory. She sang very sweetly, very simply—in a word, uncommonly well. The voice, to begin with, was an exceptionally sound soprano, but the secret and charm of it all was, of course, in the way she used it. Gladys had asked for a song to escape from a chat, but she had forgotten her motive

in asking, she had forgotten that she had asked for it, she had forgotten much that it had seemed impossible to forget even thus, for one moment, before the song was half finished. Very possibly, with Gladys—who knew nothing of music—this was an appeal to the senses only, but it gave her some peaceful, painless moments when such were rare; and it left her, with everything coming back to her, it is true, but with a grateful heart. So grateful, indeed, was Gladys that she forgot to express her thanks until Miss Travers smilingly asked her how she liked that song; and then, instead of answering, Gladys went over to where Lady Bligh was sitting, bent down, and asked a question, which was answered in a whisper.

Then Gladys came back to the piano. 'Yes, I *do* like that song, very, very much; and I beg your pardon for not answering you, Miss Travers, but I was thinking of something else; and I want you, please, to sing Mendelssohn's "Hear my Prayer!"' The words came quickly—they were newly learnt from Lady Bligh.

Miss Travers could not repress a smile. 'Do you know what you are asking me for?'

'Yes; for what we heard in church last Sunday evening. That's the name, because I've just asked Lady Bligh. I would rather you sang that than anything else in the world!'

'But——' Miss Travers was puzzled by the Bride's expression; she would have given anything not to refuse, yet what could she do? 'But—it isn't the sort of thing one can sit down and sing—*really* it isn't. It wants a chorus, and it is very long and elaborate.

'Yes?' Gladys seemed strangely disappointed. 'But there was one part—the part I liked—where the chorus didn't come in, I am sure. It was sung by a boy. You could do it so much better! It was about the wings of a dove, and the wilderness. You know, I come from the wilderness myself'—Gladys smiled faintly—'and I thought I'd never heard anything half so lovely before; though of course I've heard very little.'

'No matter how little you have heard, you will never hear anything much more beautiful than that,' said Miss Travers, with sympathetic enthusiasm.

'Since I cannot hear it now, however, there is an end of it.'

Gladys sighed, but her eyes pleaded still; it was impossible to look in them long and still resist. Miss Travers looked but for

a moment, then, turning round to the keys, she softly touched a chord. 'I will try the little bit you liked,' she whispered, kindly, 'whatever I make of it!'

What she did make of it is unimportant, except in its effect upon Gladys. This effect was very different from that produced a few minutes before by the song; this, at least, was no mere titillation of the senses by agreeable sounds. And it differed quite as much from the effect produced by the same thing in church on Sunday, when Gladys, after being surprised into listening, had listened only to the words. Then, indeed, the music had seemed sweet and sad, but to-night each note palpitated with a shivering, tremulous yearning, dropping into her soul a relief as deep as that of sorrow unbosomed, a comfort as soothing as the comfort of tears. And there was now an added infinity of meaning in the words (though it was the words that had thrilled her then—then, before she had brought all the present misery to pass):

O for the wings, for the wings of a dove!
Far away, far away would I rove:
In the wilderness build me a nest,
And remain there for ever at rest.

It is only a few bars, the solo here; and at the point where the chorus catches up the refrain Miss Travers softly ceased. She turned round slowly on the stool, then rose up quickly in surprise. Her ardent listener was gone. And as Miss Travers stood by the piano, peering with raised eyebrows into every corner of the room, and out into the night through the open French window, the men entered the room in a body—she was surrounded.

But Gladys had stepped softly through the window on to the lawn, re-entered the house by another way, and stolen swiftly up to her room. The last strains came to her through the open window of the drawing-room, and in at her own window, at which Gladys now knelt: and this short passage through the outer air brought them upward on the breath of the night, rarefied and softened as though from the lips of far-off angels: and so they reached her trembling ears.

The scent of roses was in the air. The moon was rising, and its rays spanned the river with a broad bridge of silver, against which some of the foliage at the garden-end stood out in fine filigree. It was a heavenly night; it was a sweet and tranquil place; but yet—

O for the wings of a dove!

Gladys had been home-sick before; she had been miserable and desperate for many, many hours; but at this moment it seemed as though hitherto she had never known what it was to pant and pray in real earnest for her old life and her own country. She was almost as a weak woman in the transports of spiritual fervour, her vision rivetted upon some material mental picture, the soul for one ecstatic instant separated from the flesh—only Gladys missed the ecstasy.

There was no light in the room; and the girl remained so entirely motionless as she knelt, that her glossy head, just raised above the level of the sill, would have seemed in the moonlight a mere inanimate accessory, if it had been seen at all. But only the bats could have seen Gladys, and they did not; at all events, it was the touch of a bat's wing upon the forehead that recalled her to herself, making her aware of voices within earshot, immediately below her window. Her room was over the dining-room. The voices were men's voices, and the scent of cigars reached her as well. She could hear distinctly, but she never would have listened had she not heard her own name spoken; and then—the weakness of the moment prevented her from rising.

'No,' said one of the voices, 'not a bit of it; oh dear, no! Gladys has her good points; and, frankly, I am getting rather to like her. But she is impossible in her position. The whole thing was a fearful mistake, which poor old Alfred will live to repent.'

The voice was unmistakable; it was Granville's.

'But'—and the other voice was that of Granville's most intimate friend, whom he had introduced to Gladys during the course of the afternoon—'doesn't he repent it already, think you?'

'Upon my word, I'm not sure that he doesn't,' said Granville.

'If you ask me,' said his friend, 'I should say there isn't a doubt of it. I've been watching him pretty closely. Mark my words, he's a miserable man!'

'Well, I'm half inclined to agree with you,' said Granville. 'I didn't think so two or three days since, but now I do. You see, there are camels' backs and there are last straws (though I wish there were no proverbs); and there never was a heavier straw than yesterday's—'gad! 'twas as heavy as the rest of the load! I mean the perfectly awful scene in the Park, which you know about, and the whole town knows about, and the low papers will publish, confound them! Yes, I believe you're right; he *can't* get over it.'

‘Poor chap!’ said Granville’s friend.

‘You may well say that. Alfred is no genius’—Granville was, apparently—‘but he has position; he has money—luckily for him; he means to settle down in the country somewhere, and, no doubt, he’d like to be somebody in the county. But how could he? Look at his wife!’

‘There ought to be a separation,’ said the friend, feelingly.

‘Well, I don’t think it’s quite as bad as that,’ said Granville, candidly. ‘Any way, there never will be one; you may trust her for that. And, I must own, I don’t think it’s all the main chance with her, either; they’re sufficiently spooney. Why, she will not even leave him for a week on a visit, though, as I understand, he’s doing his best to persuade her to.’

Gladys’s hands tightened upon the woodwork of the window-frame.

‘Can’t persuade her to?’ cried the friend. ‘What did I tell you? Why, Lord love you, he wants to get rid of her already!’

This was rather strong, even for an intimate friend, and even though the intimate friend had drunk a good deal of wine. Granville’s tone cooled suddenly.

‘We’ll drop the subject, I think. My cigar’s done, and you’ve smoked as much as is good for you. You can do as you like, but I’m going inside.’

Their footsteps sounded down the gravel-path; then the sound ceased; they had gone in by the drawing-room window.

Gladys had never once altered her position; she did not alter it now. The moon rose high in the purple sky, and touched her head with threads of silver. It was as though grey hairs had come upon her while she knelt. The sudden turning of the door-handle, and a quick step upon the threshold, aroused her. It was Alfred come for an easier coat. The people were gone.

‘What—*Gladys!*’ he cried. She rose stiffly to her feet, and confronted him with her back to the moonlight. ‘Up here—alone?’

‘You didn’t miss me, then?’ Her tone was low and hoarse—the words ran into one another in their hurried, eager utterance.

‘Why, no,’ cried Alfred; ‘to tell you the truth, I didn’t.’

He seemed to her in better spirits than he had been all day; his voice was full and cheery, and his manner brisk. Why? Evidently the evening had gone off very agreeably. Why? Was it because he had got rid of her for an hour? Was it, then, true

that he was doing his best to get rid of her for a week—that he would be only too glad to get rid of her for ever? It was as though a poniard were being held to her breast. She paused, and nerved herself to speak calmly, before, as it were, baring her bosom to the steel.

‘Alfred,’ she said at length, with slow distinctness, but not with the manner of one who is consciously asking a question of life or death, ‘I have been thinking it over, about the Barringtons; and I think I *should* like to go to them on Saturday after all. May I go?’

‘May you?’ Alfred fairly shouted. ‘I am only too delighted, Gladdie! Of course you may.’

The poniard went in—to the hilt.

So delighted was Alfred that he caught her in his arms and kissed her. Her cheek was quite cold, her frame all limp. Though she reeled on her feet, she seemed to shrink instinctively from his support.

‘What’s the matter, Gladdie?’ he cried, in sudden alarm. ‘What’s wrong—are you ill? Stop, I’ll fetch——’

She interrupted him in a whisper.

‘Fetch no one.’ She dropped one hand upon the dressing-table, leant her weight upon it, and motioned him back with the other. ‘I am not ill; I only was faint, just for a moment. I am all right now. There, that’s a long breath; I can speak quite properly again. You see, it was only a passing faintness. I must have fallen asleep by the window. I was enjoying the lovely night, and that must have done it. There, I am only tired now, and want sleep.’

The acid had been applied, and not in drops. Its work was complete.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIRST PARTING.

It was Saturday forenoon, and everything was ready for the departure of Gladys. Moreover, the moment had come. Garrod was at the door with the carriage; the phlegmatic stable-boy, having performed feats of unsuspected strength with the luggage, had retired into his own peculiar shell, and lurked in sullen humility at the far side of the horses; while Mr. Dix figured imposingly in the hall. Alfred was here too, waiting for Gladys to come

down. But Gladys was upstairs saying good-bye to Lady Bligh, and lingering over the parting somewhat strangely, for one who was going away for a week only.

‘If I hear any more such absurd talk,’ Lady Bligh said at last, and with some impatience, ‘about forgiveness and the like, I shall punish you by not allowing you to leave me at all.’

‘It is too late to do that,’ Gladys hastily put in. ‘But, oh, Lady Bligh! if only you knew how happy you have made me—how happily I go away, having your forgiveness for everything, for everything——’

‘Except for what you are saying now. How wildly you do talk, child! One would think you were going for ever.’

‘Who knows, Lady Bligh? There are accidents every day. That’s why I’m thankful to be leaving like this.’

Lady Bligh hated sentimentality. Only the intense earnestness of the girl’s voice and manner restrained her from laughing; sentimentality was only fit to be laughed at; but this was sentimentality of a puzzling kind.

A minute later, with passionate kisses and incoherent expressions, out of all proportion to the occasion, and fairly bewildering to poor Lady Bligh, Gladys was gone.

Alfred scanned her narrowly as they drove to the station. By the way she kept turning round to gaze backward, you would have thought her anxious to ‘see the last of’ things, as small boys are when the holidays are over, and bigger boys when they go finally out into the world. Alfred was going with her to Liverpool Street. She had refused to go at all if he took her (as he wanted to) all the way into Suffolk, to return himself by the next train.

‘Gladdie,’ he said, after watching her closely, ‘you look cut up; is it from saying good-bye to the *mater*?’

‘I suppose it must be—if I really look like that.’

‘There is still, perhaps, some soreness——’

‘No, there is none now,’ said Gladys, quickly.

‘Then what is it?’

‘Only that it is so dreadful, saying good-bye!’

‘My darling!—by the way you talk you might be going for good and all. And it is only for a week.’

She did not answer, but pressed the hand that closed over her own.

During the half-hour’s run to Waterloo he continued to glance furtively, and not without apprehension, at her face. It was

unusually pale; dark rings encircled the eyes, and the eyes were unusually brilliant.

They had a compartment to themselves. He held her hand all the way, and she his, like a pair of moon-struck young lovers; and, for the most part, they were as silent.

'You have not been yourself these last few days,' he said at length; 'I am glad you are going.'

'And I am glad of that,' she answered.

Her tone was odd.

'But I shall be wretched while you are gone,' he quickly added.

She made no reply to this; it seemed to her an after-thought. But, if it was, it grew upon him with swift and miserable effect as the minutes remaining to them gradually diminished. When they drove up to Liverpool Street he was in the depths of dejection.

It was their first parting.

She insisted on sending the necessary telegram to the Barringtons herself. His depression made him absent, and even remiss. He stood listlessly by while she filled in the form; at any other time he would have done this for her, or at least looked over her shoulder to check the spelling; but this afternoon he was less attentive in little things than she had ever known him, because she had never known him so depressed.

It was their first parting.

He had got her a compartment to herself, but only at her earnest insistence; he had spoken for a carriage full of people, or the one reserved for ladies—anything but solitary confinement. It was the Cambridge train; there were few stoppages and no changes.

Gladys was ensconced in her corner. For the moment, her husband sat facing her. Four minutes were left them.

'You have a Don in the next carriage to you; an ancient and wonderfully amiable one, I should say,' observed Alfred, with a sickly attempt at levity. 'I wish you were under his wing, my dear!'

Gladys made a respondent effort, an infinitely harder one. 'No, thanks,' she said; 'not *me*!'

'Come, I say! Is it nervousness or vanity?'

'It is neither.'

'Yet you look nervous, Gladdie, joking apart—and, honestly, I never felt less like joking in my life! And you are pale, my darling; and your hand is so cold!'

She withdrew the hand.

But one more minute was left. 'Better get out, sir,' said the guard, 'and I'll lock the lady in.'

Gladys felt a shiver pass through her entire frame. With a supreme effort she controlled herself. They kissed and clasped hands. Then Alfred stepped down heavily on to the platform.

The minute was a long one; these minutes always are. It was an age in passing, a flash to look back upon. These minutes are among the strangest accomplishments of the sorcerer Time.

'It is dreadful to let you go alone, darling, like this,' he said, standing on the foot-board and leaning in. 'At least you ought to have had Bunn with you. You might have given way in that, Gladdie.'

'No,' she whispered tremulously; 'I—I like going alone.'

'You must write at once, Gladdie.'

'To-morrow; but you could only get it latish on Monday.'

The bell was ringing. You know the clangour of a station bell; of all sounds the last that it resembles is that of the funeral knell; yet this was its echo in the heart of Gladys.

'Well, it's only for a week, after all, isn't it, Gladdie? It will be the weariest week of my life, I know. But I shan't mind—after all, it's my own doing—if only you come back with a better colour. You have been so pale, Gladdie, these last few days—pale and excitable. But it's only a week, my darling, eh?'

She could not answer.

The guard blew his whistle. There was an end of the minute at last.

'Stand back,' she whispered: her voice was stifled with tears.

'Back?'—Alfred peered up into her face, and a sudden pallor spread upon his own—'with your dear eyes full of tears, where I never yet saw tears before? Back?—God forgive me for thinking of it, I'll come with you yet!'

He made as though to dive headlong through the window; but, looking him full in the eyes through her tears, his girl-wife laid a strong hand on each of his shoulders and forced him back. He staggered as the platform came under his feet. The train was already moving. He stood and gazed.

Gladys was waving to him, and smiling through her tears. So she continued until she could see him no more. Then she fell back upon the cushions, and, for a time, consciousness left her.

It was their first parting.

CHAPTER XVI.

TRACES.

ALFRED did not become unconscious, nor even feel faint: he was a man. But he did feel profoundly wretched. He tried to shake off this feeling, but failed. Later, on his way back through the City, he stopped somewhere to try and lunch it off, and with rather better success. He was a man: he proceeded to throw the blame upon the woman. It was Gladys who had supplied all the sentiment (and there had been an absurd amount of it) at their parting; it was the woman who had exaggerated this paltry week's separation, until it had assumed, perhaps for them both—at the moment—abnormal dimensions; he, the man, was blameless. If *his* way had obtained, she should have gone away in highest spirits, instead of in tears—and all for one insignificant week! He should write her a serious, if not a severe, letter on the subject. So Alfred went down to Twickenham in quite a valiant mood to face his week of single-blessedness, and to affect a droll appreciation of it in the popular, sprightly manner of the married man.

But the miserable feeling returned—if, indeed, it had ever been chased fairly away; and it returned with such force that Alfred was obliged to own at last that it, too, was exaggerated and out of all proportion to the exciting cause. He, in his turn, was sentimentalising as though Gladys had gone for a term of years. He was conscious of this; but he could not help it. His thoughts seemed bound to the parting of this Saturday, powerless to fly forward to the reunion of the next. A vague, dim sense of finality was the restraining bond; but this sense was not long to remain dim and vague. Meanwhile, so far as Alfred was concerned, the Sunday that followed was wrapped in a gloom that not even the genial presence of the distinguished (but jocular) guest could in any way pierce or mitigate. Nevertheless, it contained the last tranquil moments that Alfred was to know at that period of his life; for it led him to the verge of an ordeal such as few men are called upon to undergo.

He was not a little surprised on the Monday morning to find among the letters by the first post one addressed to his wife. She had received scarcely any letters since her arrival in England—two or three from tradesmen, an invitation or so—nothing from Australia; but this letter was directed in a large and somewhat

vulgar hand, with which Alfred fancied he was not wholly unfamiliar; and he suddenly remembered that he had seen it before in Miss Barrington's note of invitation. Now, the post-mark bore the name of the town to which Gladys had booked from Liverpool Street, and the date of the day before; and how could Miss Barrington write to Gladys at Twickenham, when Gladys was staying with Miss Barrington in Suffolk?

He tore open the envelope, and his hand shook as he did so. When he had read to the end of the letter, which was very short, his face was gray and ghastly; his eyes were wild and staring; he sank helplessly into a chair. The note ran thus:

'Dearest Glad,—We are *so* disappointed, you can't think. As for me, I've been in the sulks ever since your telegram came this afternoon. What *ever can* have prevented your coming, at the *very last minute*—for you wire from *Liverpool Street*? Do write at once, for I'm *horribly* anxious, to your loving

'ADA.

'P.S.—And do *come* at once, if it's nothing serious.

'Saturday night.'

Alfred read the letter a second time, and an extraordinary composure came over him. He folded the letter, restored it to its envelope, and put the envelope in his pocket. Then he looked at the clock. It wanted a quarter to eight. The Judge was no doubt up and about somewhere; but none of the others were down. Alfred rang the bell, and left word that he had received a letter begging an early interview on important business, and that he would breakfast in town.

Alfred was stunned; but he had formed a plan. This plan he proceeded to put into effect; or rather, once formed, the plan evolved itself into mechanical action without further thought. For some hours following he did not perfectly realise either what he was doing or why he was doing it. He never thoroughly pulled himself together, until a country conveyance, rattling him through country lanes, whisked into a wooded drive, and presently past a lawn where people were playing lawn-tennis, and so to the steps of a square, solid, country house. But he had all his wits about him, and those sharpened to the finest possible point, when he looked to see whether Gladys was, or was not, among the girls on the lawn. She was not. That was settled. He got out and rang the bell. He inquired for Mr. Barrington; Mr. Barrington was playing at lawn-tennis. In answer to a question from the

butler, Bligh said that he would rather see Mr. Barrington in the house than go to him on the tennis-court. He could wait until the set was finished. He had come from London expressly to speak for a few minutes with Mr. Barrington. His name would keep until Mr. Barrington came; but he was from Australia.

The last piece of information was calculated to fetch Mr. Barrington at once; and it did. He came as he was, in his flannels, his thick hairy arms bare to the elbow: a bronzed, leonine man of fifty, with the hearty, hospitable manner of the Colonial 'squatocracy.' Alfred explained in a few words who he was, and why he had come. He had but one or two questions to ask, and he asked them with perfect self-possession. They elicited the assurance that nothing had been heard of Gladys in that quarter, beyond the brief message received on the Saturday. Mr. Barrington found the telegram, and handed it to his visitor. It read: 'Prevented coming at last moment. Am writing—Gladys.' By the time of despatch, Bligh knew that it was the message she had written out in his presence.

'Of course she never wrote?' he said coolly to the squatter.

'We have received nothing,' was the grave answer.

'Yet she started,' said Alfred. 'I put her in the train myself, and saw her off.'

His composure was extraordinary. The Australian was more shaken than he.

'Did you make any inquiries on the line?' asked Barrington, after a pause.

'Inquiries about what?'

'There might have been—an accident.'

Bligh tapped the telegram with his finger. 'This points to no accident,' he said, grimly. 'But,' he added, more thoughtfully, 'one might make inquiries down the line, as you say. It might do good to make inquiries all along the line.'

'Do you mean to say you have made none?'

'None,' said Alfred, fetching a deep sigh. 'I came here straight. I could think of nothing else but getting here—and—perhaps—finding her! I thought—I thought there might be some—mistake!' His voice suddenly broke. The futility of the hope that had sustained him for hours had dawned upon him slowly, but now the cruel light hid nothing any longer. She was not here; she had not been heard of here; and the precious hours had been lost. He grasped his hat and held out his trembling hand.

'Thank you! Thank you, Mr. Barrington! Now I must be off.'

'Where to?'

'To Scotland Yard. I should have gone there first. But—I was mad, I think; I thought there had been some mistake. Only some mistake.'

The squatter was touched to the soul. 'I have known her, off and on, since she was a baby,' he said. 'Bligh—if you would only let me, I should like to come with you?'

Alfred wrung the other's hand, but refused his offer.

'No. Though I am grateful indeed, I would rather go alone. It would do no good, your coming; I should prefer to be alone. So only one word more. Your daughter was a great friend of Gladys; better not tell her anything of this. For it may be only some wild freak, Mr. Barrington. God knows what it is!'

It was evening when he reached London. A whole day had been wasted. He stated his case to the police; and then there was no more to be done that night. With an eagerness that all at once became feverish, he hastened back to Twickenham. It was late when he arrived at the house; only Granville was up; and, for an instant, Granville thought his brother had been drinking. The delusion lasted no longer than that instant. It was not drink with Alfred: his excitement was suppressed: he stood staring at Granville with a questioning, eager expression, as though he expected news. What could it mean? What could be the explanation of such manifest excitement in Alfred, of all people in the world?

Granville thought of the one thing, or rather of the one person, likely, and threw out a feeler:

'Have you heard from Gladys?'

'No,' said Alfred, in a hollow voice. '*Have you seen her?*'

This was the last idea that had possessed him: that Gladys might have come home, that he might find her there on his return. It was the second time that day that he had cheated himself with vain, unreasoning hopes.

'Seen her?' Granville screwed in his eye-glass tighter. 'Of course I haven't seen her! How should we see her here, my good fellow, when she's down in Suffolk?'

Alfred turned pale, and for an instant stood glaring; then he burst into a harsh laugh.

'You know how odd she is, Gran. I thought she might have tired of her friends and come back. She's capable of it, and I feared it—that's all.'

He left the room abruptly.

'Poor chap!' said Granville, with a sentient shake of the head; 'he *is* far gone, if you like.'

Next morning Alfred walked into Scotland Yard as the clocks were striking eleven. His appointment was for that hour, and he had striven successfully to keep it to the second; though commonly he was a far from punctual man. In point of fact, he had been sitting and loitering about the embankment for a whole hour, waiting until the minute of his appointment should come, as unwilling to go to it a minute before the time as a minute late. So he entered the Yard while Big Ben was striking. And this was a young man with a reputation for unpunctuality, and all-round unbusinesslike, dilatory habits.

Moreover, for a man who, as a rule, was not fastidious enough about such matters, his appearance this morning was well-nigh immaculate. But, perhaps, he had only sought, by a long and elaborate toilet, to wile away the long, light hours of the early morning: for, on looking at him closely, it was impossible to believe that he had slept a wink. The fact is, abnormal circumstances had conduced to bring about in Alfred an entirely abnormal state of mind. In a word, and a trite one, he was no longer himself. A crust of insensibility had hardened upon him. Had there been no news for him at all at the Yard this morning, possibly this crust might have been broken through: for he was better prepared for one crushing blow than for the bruises of repeated disappointment. Thus, the very worst news might have affected him less, at the moment, than no news, which is supposed popularly to be of the best. But there was some news.

Official investigation had thus far discovered what a person of average intelligence, with a little more presence of mind than Alfred had shown, might have ascertained, perhaps, for himself. Yet the information was important. Gladys had left the train, with her luggage, two stations before her destination. This was testified by the guard of the train. But there was a later fact still. It was certain that Gladys had returned to town by the next up-train: for she had personally deposited her luggage in the cloak-room at Liverpool Street between the hours of six and seven on the Saturday evening. There all trace of her was lost, for the present; but it was extremely likely that fresh traces would be forthcoming during the course of the day.

The simple nature of the inquiries that had elicited the above information will be at once apparent ; but Alfred went away with an exalted opinion of the blood-hound sagacity of the police. In his present condition of mind, his opinion, good or bad, was not worth much. He went to a club which he had not been in for years, and of which he had long ceased to look upon himself as a member ; but his bankers, doubtless, still paid his subscription ; and in any case it was not likely that he would be turned out. He would find some quiet corner and sit down and wait until the messenger came from Scotland Yard ; for, of course, something more would be discovered during the course of the day—had they not promised as much ? The quiet corner that he chose was an up-stairs window, from which there was a fair glimpse of the river. The river fascinated him most strangely to-day. During the hour he had loitered on the embankment, between ten and eleven, he had raised his eyes but seldom from the river.

He sat long at the window—so long that minutes ran into hours and the summer afternoon melted into the summer evening. The room was a reading-room ; the windows were in snug recesses. Alfred had his recess to himself for hours and hours. He was conscious of no other presence ; certainly no one spoke to him : very possibly, with his beard, no one recognised him.

The sun was sinking. He could not see it from this window ; but he could see the heightened contrast of light and shadow among the ripples of the river, and the shadows deepening far away under Westminster Bridge. This was where his gaze rested. It was a stony gaze ; his lips were compressed and bloodless, his features pointed and pale. A hideous vision filled his mind ; but it was a vision only ; it had no meaning. He did not realise it. He realised nothing. Someone came and asked if he was Mr. Bligh. It was a club servant. A man awaited him below. Alfred went down ; the messenger from Scotland Yard was come at last.

The messenger was the bearer of a line :

‘ A lady’s hat and jacket have been found in the river below Blackwall. If you wish to see them, they are here.’

Five minutes later Alfred walked into the office in which he had heard the result of the investigations that morning, and identified instantly the jacket and hat awaiting his inspection.

Gladys had gone away in them on Saturday !

(To be continued.)

